

ESSAYS
ON VARIOUS
IMPORTANT SUBJECTS,
MORAL and DIVINE.

BEING
AN ATTEMPT
TO DISTINGUISH
TRUE FROM FALSE RELIGION.

By JOHN GOLDIE. *A*

IN
THREE VOLUMES.

Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars-hill, and said; Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD; whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. Acts xvii. 22, 23.

But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which THEY CALL HERESY, so worship I the God of my fathers. Acts xxiv. 14.

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out in the world. 1 John iv. 1.

For modes of faith, let graceless zealots fight;
His can't be wrong whose life is in the right.—POPE.

V O L. I.

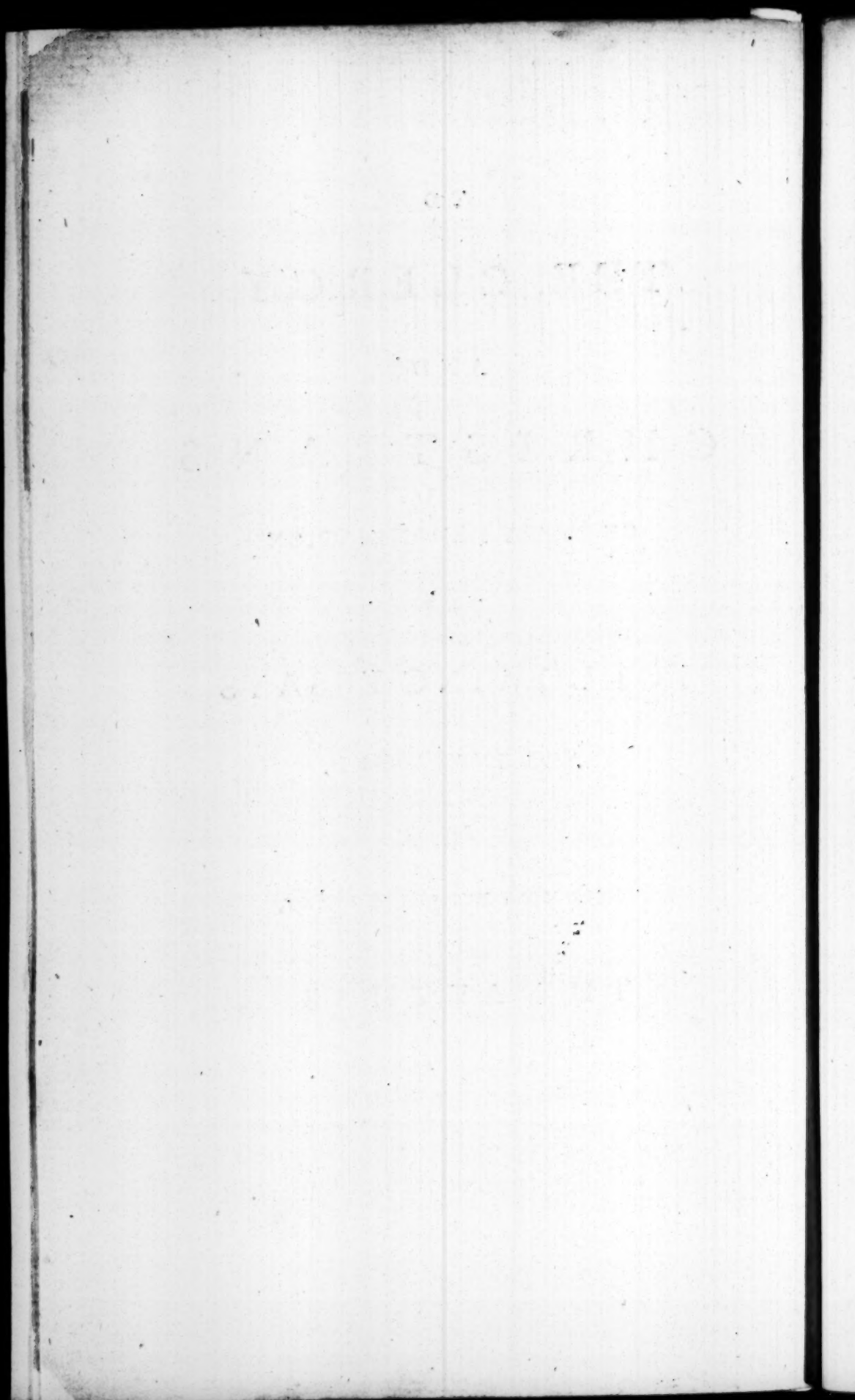
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TO
THE CLERGY,
AND
CHRISTIANS
OF EVERY DENOMINATION
THE
FOLLOWING ESSAYS
ARE INSCRIBED,
BY
THEIR MOST HUMBLE SERVANT,
THE AUTHOR.



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T O T H E
R E A D E R.

LET none who look on these different essays, imagine that they are done with a view to expose or deride real religion. They are intended for a quite different purpose; for the design thereof is only ~~in order~~ to separate the dross from the metal, or the chaff from the wheat, and to expose them to the wind, on purpose that the wheat may be cleansed, and the metal purged from every pernicious corruption of alloy. And however hard any of these different remarks may appear, against bigotry, superstition, or party-religion, and sectaries of whatever kind, I do assure you, they proceed from nothing else but a true principle, and out of a most sincere love to real and unadulterated Christianity, as it is founded upon the simplicity of the revealed scriptures of truth; and so far as I apprehend, they are free of all manner of bigotry, superstition, and enthusiasm. And I by no means imagine that the love of the great Creator is circumscribed to a party; but that among all such, in whatever nation, church, or sect of men that fear God, and love both him and their fellow-creatures in sincerity, and work righteousness, shall be accepted of him.

I have therefore drawn up these different essays, only in way of a looking-glass, in order to

show such as will be pleased to look therein-to, that they may the easier discern the different spots, or defilements of superstition, with which party-religion is so much bespattered. For a looking-glass is a very useful piece of furniture for such as desire to keep themselves pure from defilement, and appear with decency, as becomes honesty and uprightness.

So, in like manner, this looking-glass is intended for all different denominations of Christians, that love the simplicity of the gospel, and desire to keep clear from the defilement of superstition, that is brought on by the doctrines, traditions, and commandments of fallible men: and that such as desire to know if any of these different defilements cleave unto them, they may look therein-to, and behold themselves, in order that they may wash and be pure from all these their different spots and defilements whatever.

Again, as the returning sun advances nearer and nearer, from the winter toward the summer solstice, by which the northern side, or our hemisphere, of the globe being visited thereby, the vegetable world revives, and is animated more and more by reason of its light and heat, until it is thereby restored to perfect life. Likewise, from the same cause, all the various tribes of different insects, like a new creation, are thereby animated and brought unto perfect life, so that eve-

ry one thereof, may occupy, and be employed in whatever sphere; or station, hath been appointed them of God. So, in like manner, when any of these different tribes, sects, or parties, come to understand themselves delineated, or pointed out by any of these essays, they will soon come to be agitated, and set a hissing about their respective hives, by which these different sectarians will thereby single out, and distinguish themselves; this being an invariable mark, whereby one may come to know them from others.

For instance, we see also that if any one has got a piece of counterfeit coin, made of yellow metal, or gilded over, in order to deceive, that, whether the possessor be the maker or not, he is still averse to a near inspection being taken thereof; if only the possessor, he is afraid of losing the supposed value, and if the counterfeiter, his neck. This is the very case with all such as want to substitute the shadow for the substance, and would have a reality to give way, in order that a mistake may take place.

So, in like manner, it fares the very same with all your different kinds of counterfeited doctrines, religions, or opinions; for the more nearly they come to be inspected, they are still the more liable to be detected; and the more they are censured, the more it will be taken amiss by their different votaries; for the case is manifest to every one, when duly weighed, and rightly

understood, that it still carries along with it the aspect of a bad cause, when it will neither abide by reason, nor stand a strict examination; but that which is from God will stand the test and examination before angels, men, or devils. And if persons will but admit themselves the liberty to reason impartially, in an accurate and judicious manner, they will find, that the worst of what is contained in all these different essays, consists (if it were possible) only of too much fact. But, after all that hath been express'd, I am apt to believe, that it will prove much the same to them of this generation, as the preaching of Noah did to the antediluvian world; for his preaching proved of no effect to any, but to those of his own family or household, over which he had the ascendancy.

Hence, who knows but that part of these essays may yet serve, with some of these different sectarians, as so many additional texts, in way of ridicule, in order to harangue, and entertain their hearers, for the space of some different centuries to come.

Again, but if I shall be found guilty to attack so much as one article, upon principles contrary to the honour of God, or inconsistent with the nature and perfections of the Deity, why ought they not to defend them against my attack; but, if they are such as cannot be defended, or if they come to defend them upon no

other principles, but only upon the account of priestcraft, and what they call orthodoxy, not only independent, but inconsistent with the honour, nature, and perfections of the true God, they, by no means, ought to be defended.

In the whole of these essays, I only speak to such as have not yet denied the use of their rational powers; but with such as are next to infidels, who suppose that God will act different from the rectitude of his nature, in the government of his rational creatures, and likewise refuse the use of these powers, I have nothing to do.

Hence, there is not the least doubt, but that this performance will meet with much opposition and condemnation from the world, which is neither more nor less than the common fate of what every enemy of Satan's kingdom may lay their account with. But my advice is this, that the judicious reader will take all upon trial, and nothing upon trust; for he that enquireth not into a matter, but judgeth upon hearsay, is nothing more than a fool; and therefore, I require that the reader bring up every particular thereof to that infallible test, viz. the nature and perfections of the just and true God, in order that he may try whether they will agree therewith or not. By this rule the reader will find, whether he hath a right to condemn or approve; for whoever they be that take upon

them to judge and condemn, without paying a proper respect to this rule, God will judge betwixt them and me; for to him alone I make my appeal, whether or not I have spoken agreeable to his will. Let none therefore imagine that I am for forming a party. No; I am not. But let all such as see their mistake abide by their party; that however far men may see things wrong, let them not desist, but declare against them with all their might. For when a ship is at sea, and springs a leak, it is not proper that they should flee to the boat, and depart from her, but stand to the pump, that if possible the leak may be stopped, by which means they may save not only themselves, but both ship and cargo also; and without this active industry all will go to the bottom. So that when one abides by, and stands up and declares with all his might against the errors and mistakes of his party, he may be a mean, under God, to save and deliver, not only himself, but his party also: so that by reconciling, and uniting them together into one body, and thus acting, may justly hope for his reward. Whoever comes to read this book, will very easily see, that almost all these different essays are founded upon the nature and perfections of the true God; and not so much as one of the whole is built upon the doctrines, traditions, and commandments of fallible men, which are nothing more than a subterfuge for sectarians to breed

and nestle in, as may very easily be understood by every person of judgment.

I shall conclude with this last observation, that commonly the superstitious part of mankind, when there is no author's name prefixt to a publication, they will not read it; I, therefore, have studied to remove that objection. But the next will be this, they will not read, because there is an author's name prefixed thereto. But such as shut up themselves against light, and are fallen into the deepest prejudice, and have laid down a fixed resolution that they will neither be persuaded nor believe the truth, and are become proof against the powers of sense, reason, and demonstration, and have resolved not to be convinced, be the consequence what will; (as the obstinate Jews were, not only against the power of miracles, but also against Christ himself, although he gave a most full and ample proof of his mission;) yea, with such I have nothing to do; but only with those who have not as yet divested themselves of their rational powers, which they at first received from God, but are still open to the power of conviction.

Hence, it is not to be supposed but there will be many grievous objections raised against this performance, in order to overturn and set it at nought. The reason why; because it is rather too strict a search to admit any of the devil's bran to be mixed with what is real religion, or

to pass undiscerned in the name and authority of the true God. For I receive nothing barely; because of the image impressed thereupon; but only for the quality upon which the image is impressed; for there is nothing depends so much upon the king's stamp as bad or counterfeit metal, without which image it could not pass current; but that which is of a proper quality will pass as valid for full value, without any impression.

In like manner, we ought to receive no doctrines, because they are said, by men, to have come from God, except they are of a proper quality, not contrary, but agreeable to the nature and perfections of the Deity; for whatever doctrines are agreeable to the said test, to me they are valid, as from God; and, as such, we ought to receive them, whether they be said by men to have come from him or not.

ESSAYS
ON
VARIOUS SUBJECTS,
MORAL AND DIVINE.

INTRODUCTION.

The Christian religion hath received its worst or deepest wounds from those who style themselves its best friends.

THERE is not the smallest doubt but that these different essays will come under the inspection and censure of persons of various sentiments; some of whom, from different reasons, may be desirous to know upon what account I have sent these thoughts abroad into the world. My only reason being this, that as I saw Christianity so much divided, and Christ's kingdom, as it were, torn in pieces, and devoured like as by so many beasts of prey from the forest, each party tearing and running away with a certain portion thereof, to use it at pleasure, by which means the Messiah's kingdom hath not only been most wofully divided and torn asunder, but also reduced from a monarchy, to the most dismal state of an anarchical government, although each party generally admit of Christ to be the head thereof.

Thus, I have, all along, made it my business, with constant care and study, that, in all the following essays, the nature of the different attributes or moral perfections of God should be the infallible test and standard thereof; and that each of the same should be modelled out by the said test and not them by these essays; for it is more proper, that the moral perfections of God should become our standard, than that our imperfections, as creatures, should be made his; for the lesser ought always to be ruled by the greater, and not the greater by the lesser, viz. the creature is to be ruled by the Creator, and not the Creator by the creature. For if we refuse to be directed by God, we refuse to be his subjects; and if we should vainly take upon us to direct God, contrary to the nature of his moral perfections, we take upon us to dictate to, and make God subject to us, and not we subject to him.

Again, it is not to be expected that these different essays are to pass without censure, and never so much as to be taken notice of. This is not to be supposed, and far less to be wished for; for, as I apprehend, if this should be the case, it would be an infallible evidence that the disease was become incurable, and proof against the power of medicine, and might thereby prove fatal at last. For when the wound is probed, and smarting salves applied thereto, for its cleansing,

if the patient does not feel them, it is a most certain sign that the wound is become putrid and dangerous: or, when a person, under a disease becomes entirely insensible of his trouble; it is also a sign that the disease is dangerous; yea, in both these cases insensibility is looked upon to be a dangerous symptom, and the consequence to be bad; but when the smartness of the wound, or, sensibleness of the diseases remain with the patient, there is still ground of hope for a cure, or recovery, from his complaint.

From thence it may be inferred, if these wounds that Christ's kingdom, and Christianity in general, have received, from those who pretend to be its best friends, should be insensible and past feeling, the case would be lamentable, and the consequence would be looked upon and suspected as dangerous; but if any of these essays meet with censure, it proves a most certain evidence, that there is infallibly a wound to which it hath been applied; for where there is no sore, there can be no smarting pain from the salve; and it is likewise a comfortable hope, and mark of recovery, that it hath not lost its sensibility, but that it still remains quick, and is capable of feeling. For a smarting salve can give no uneasiness where there is no incision; but where there is a wound or sore, the salve will soon discover itself, by reason of the smart and cleansing

nature thereof. So in like manner, if any of these essays shall prove medicinal, they will even cause a sensible smartness in the feeling of these wounds to which they are applied.

C H A P. I.

An attempt for the overturning of Satan's kingdom.

IT is observed by the Apostle Paul, that every house was built by some man, but he that built all things was God. And whoever reads this performance impartially, will also find that the greatest part or substance thereof is founded upon the most strong and sure foundation, altho' the most of the building has been partly digged and taken from nature's quarry; only plain and simple, neither polished, cut, nor carved by art, or man's device, in order to deceive the simple, the gaudy, the thoughtless, and unthinking croud, affected only with aerial fancies, or toys like children.

As for these different essays and remarks, contained in this publication, which serve only as so many useful materials for the rearing up of this present structure, however hard, coarse, or unpolished any of these pieces may appear, they may still be found the more useful for the purpose for which they were intended, in the different parts of the said building, for strength

and defence, against whatever attacks are made, to which it is liable in being exposed from different quarters, by the discharges from the heavy artillery, which these engineers let fly from off the fundry batteries belonging to their different garrisons, by which this structure is environed around on all hands, to the fury and impetuosity of its relentless enemies, that are encamped against it, intending, that, if possible, they may the better oblige it to surrender. This fabric being now finished, its standard hoisted up, with colours flying, the inscription upon which being *liberty to the captives; or, a release to such as are ensnared and enslaved by the doctrines, traditions, and commandments of fallible men.*

All this no sooner done, than Satan immediately comes to spy out its flag, at a distance, from his infernal palace of Pandemonium; and, as he beheld the inscription, he stood confused, inflamed with rage, with all his different powers around him; and, in the midst of this great confusion, horror and distress, methinks, I just now hear him swearing vengeance and fury against it, giving immediate orders to one of his chief heralds to proclaim aloud, amongst all these infernal powers, that whoever shall have the courage to attack yonder structure, either by force of arms, storm, or stratagem, and overturn its standard, and bring off its colours, the same shall be advanced, and made commander in chief

over all the different forces contained in his dominions. Whoever amongst you hath courage, let him now come and distinguish his valour, in order that he may be advanced to favour and esteem.

This proclamation being no sooner given, than Apollyon comes and offers himself a free volunteer. He is no sooner established commander in chief of the different forces in Satan's dominions, than he immediately takes the field, and posts himself at the head thereof, and puts them in battle array against the said structure. This being not sufficient, orders are issued out to summon up, not only all the different standing regiments, but also whatever regiments of militia were to be found in his realm; and likewise press-warrants granted, that all such as were capable to bear arms should be forced unto the war, on purpose to attack, vanquish, and overturn this new raised fabric. Upon which account orders were not only given, but even doubled, redoubled, and dispatched to the great forge or volcano, mentioned elsewhere, for all different kinds of implements and instruments of war, with various pieces of artillery, from the largest piece of ordnance, viz. such as mortars, with bombshells, down to a musket. For which reason, some of his most niggardly subjects will not dare look upon this fabric, lest that they be overcharged by the great forge or volcano, for the

different kinds of artillery, and ammunition, occasioned by reason of their present extraordinary demands; but will even refer it to some future period, when the fury of others shall then be exhausted, and artillery, ammunition, and all other kind of instruments of war, shall be fallen in price. But when once these different magazines are exhausted, and their ammunition wasted away, then, at last, they shall beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into prooning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation; neither shall they learn war any more.

C H A P. II.

An infallible rule whereby we may understand the true and proper meaning of the revealed scriptures.

THERE is oft-times both profit, pleasure, and satisfaction to be found, and drawn from the knowledge of every science; but, of all arts and sciences whatever, there is none to be equalled or compared with a just and proper knowledge of the true God, especially, so far as he is to be found, held forth, and delineated unto us, in the simplicity of the revealed scriptures, where he may be very easily discerned, if they are understood in a just and proper sense.

Now, therefore, the most infallible rule whereby we are to understand the revealed scriptures; is this; we must be extremely careful concerning every particular text, to see whether it consists of a literal or figurative meaning; and, for our better understanding thereof, in order that we may discern and take up the same, in their true and proper light, we must always bring the text or texts to that infallible test, viz. the nature and perfections of the true God; and if the literal meaning of the text will not agree therewith, it is morally certain, that it consists of a figurative sense. For it is altogether simply impossible, that ever a just God either did, or will, reveal his will to men in such a manner as would entirely destroy the very nature of his moral attributes; for it is only by not paying a proper attention to this rule that hath been the cause from whence all these different divisions have arisen, and taken place in the Christian world. For when the foundation is not properly searched; upon which the structure is built, it, of necessity, must give way and fall to pieces at last. For it is only by searching the foundation, in a due and proper manner, whereby the structure remains proof against all the storms, tempests, and different attacks that can possibly be raised against it. For if men would only be at the pains of bringing every particular text of the scripture so far as its necessity requireth, unto this infallible test,

viz. the moral attributes and perfections of the true God, such as his holiness, justice, goodness and truth, in order to see whether they will agree therewith or not, in place of that corrupt test, viz. the doctrines, traditions, commandments, and nostrums of fallible men, whereby they may soon come to understand whether the text, or texts, consists of a literal or figurative meaning. With what harmony would this consequence be attended with, amongst mankind, in the Christian world in general. It would even be the effectual means in restoring her, i. e. the Christian church, to her native splendor and purity, that she formerly possessed and enjoyed in the days of her youth. Again,

Whether it is most proper that the sense of whatever different texts of scripture, such as requires it, should be brought up to comply with the nature and perfections of the Deity, that we may know their true and proper meaning; or will it be more proper to bring down the perfections of the Deity to the letter of the scriptures, in making them comply with the literal sense thereof.

The former subjects the sense of the text to the nature of God, and the latter subjects and brings down the nature of God to the literal meaning of the text, though never so inconsistent therewith. This has ever been the case with all designing men, in making the literal

sense of the text subservient to answer all their different purposes, in the establishing of this, viz. their own favourite systems or hypotheses.

It is worthy of observation, concerning the nature of the revealed scriptures, that they are often delivered to us, by the speaker, in such a manner as best suits the nature of our weak capacities. When parents begin to learn children to walk, do they not first take them by the hand, and lead them for some time before they are capable to walk by themselves. Similar to this, when God first comes to teach or instruct his rational creatures, does he not, as it were, first take and lead them on by the hand, step by step, in order to direct them after such a manner as their weak capacities are best capable to receive it. When children go to school, do not their master first teach them all the different characters or letters of the alphabet, and sounds belonging thereto, and next the syllables, before he make them form or express the words. So, in like manner, does not God first teach or instruct us by such figures as our weak capacities are best capable to understand. Does not the apostle Paul say, "I have fed you with milk, and not with meat; for you were not able to bear it." And, likewise, "milk is for babes, but strong meat belongeth to them of full age." From this it is evident, that we are not to understand and receive a great many of these different scriptures in a literal

sense; but ought to bring them to that divine test, meaning the nature and rectitude of the true God, viz. such as his holiness, his justice, his goodness and truth, that we may try them thereby, and know whether they will agree therewith or not. For there are a great many of these different scriptures we may just as well believe as when we see the model of an house that the model is the house, and that we may go and lodge therein; or that when we see the plan of an estate, that the plan is the estate, and that by purchasing the plan thereof the property of the estate becomes ours. We may just as well suppose the above, as to believe and receive these scriptures in a literal sense, if not agreeing with the foresaid test. Or, that when we come to view the plan of a city, or map of a country, a kingdom, or continent, we may just as well believe that the plan, or map itself, is the substance of whatever figure is represented by it; and that by our being acquainted with the said plan or map, we have actually made a tour through each place thereof, and been in the same, as to understand and receive every particular scripture in a literal sense. For there are many scriptures laid down before us, only in order to direct, instruct, and strengthen our weak capacities.

For when God is held forth and represented under almost all the different parts and faculties of the human body, are we to suppose and be-

lieve him to be a gross material substance like ourselves? Certainly not. Or, when Christ is said to be a door, a rock, or a vine, are we to suppose him to be so? By no means. For these, and many other scriptures of like nature, are only laid down in these different lights, in order thereby to direct us when we are nothing more than children in capacity; but are never intended that they should be taken up and understood in such a sense, when we come to arrive at knowledge. Thus, for example, how ridiculous would it appear to see a person, at the age of forty, in perfect health and strength, and possessed of all his natural faculties, and yet led about by the hand like a mere child. But how much more ridiculous still is it to see persons, or people that pretend to large degrees of knowledge, who do not only believe and receive almost all the scriptures, in a literal sense, but even maintain and assert the truth thereof, though diametrically opposite to the very nature of the true God. And it is only by taking up so many different portions of the scriptures, in a literal sense, such as will not agree with the above test, that hath not only divided, but may be said to have so much defaced Christianity; for without a cause, there cannot possibly be an effect. And the very chief cause of all the different divisions, strifes, and animosities, that taketh place in the Christian world, ariseth, and proceeds, from a want of

knowledge, in their not bringing the scriptures to a just and proper test, in order that they may thoroughly understand their natural meaning, by trying whether thê constructions they have put thereon will agree with the nature of the true God or not. For wrong notions, and inconsistent conceptions of the Deity, do not only confound, but put an end to all true religion, and thereby shews what a poor and pitiful pass religion is brought under, when modelled out by men below or unworthy of the nature of the one true God.

Hence, though the Christian religion, as delivered by its great Author, is by far the best above all others, it is now, through the different innovations made thereupon, by the various systems and doctrines of men, become so deformed, in its nature, that they who are its greatest professors scarce know where to find it; some of whom, crying out of its being in one place, and some in another; while neither of them are in the right, or in possession thereof.

Again, I would enquire at all such as require the scriptures to be taken up in a literal sense, whether or not it is more proper that the literal meaning of such texts, as make the nature and perfections of the Deity inconsistent with himself, and set them at variance with one another; or that these texts should be understood in a figurative meaning. The last is undoubtedly to

the honour of God, but the former surely to his dishonour; but such as those who esteem and prefer the honour of their systems to the honour of the Deity, they are only the votaries and servants of men, and not of God. And for an evident proof that we are not to depend upon the literal sense, or meaning of the text or texts, except it or they agree with the rectitude of the divine Nature, I shall only repeat and show you what one of the most celebrated and ancient fathers says concerning this, (viz. Athanasius) “Should we understand and take up a great part of the sacred writ literally, or in a literal sense, we should inevitably soon fall into the most enormous blasphemy.”

It is true indeed, that the literal sense and meaning of the scriptures is universally received, held out, and maintained as unalterable by the Papists; and the reason given by them is this, that it is not possible that ever God would give a revelation to deceive men, or to be taken up in any other meaning than in that whereby they are literally expressed and delivered. It being maintained by those, that the not receiving and believing the scriptures, according to the letter, is held by such as setting them aside, and, as it were, a rejecting the whole counsel of God. And for to understand the scriptures in a figurative sense, in such a way as will not agree with the letter, it is supposed, by them, an unpardonable crime.

This is not only the case with Papists alone, but too much so with Protestants also, Jews not excepted.

The taking up of the scriptures, (particularly the Old Testament,) in a literal sense, is that which the apostle Paul styles the vail that was upon the eyes of the Jews, which prevented them from seeing its true and figurative meaning, viz. in the gospel; upon which account they expected him, (viz. Christ) to have been a temporal prince, or king, and by reason of his not taking upon him, or claiming that office, which was expected by the Jews he would have done, they put him to death.—So, in like manner, it is the very same vail, of taking up the scriptures, (particularly the New Testament) in a literal sense, as not being removed from the Christian world, (but more especially the Papists) and it is this alone which hath been the chief cause of all these different divisions and mischiefs, that hath ever taken place among Christians; and till once these scales of thick darkness drop from their eyes, viz. their understanding the scriptures according to the letter, they cannot possibly see or know their true and proper meaning. For so long as Christians take up the scriptures, especially the New Testament, in a literal sense, they must still, of necessity, lye under this vail of thick or gross darkness. And as it is morally certain, that one that is under a vail, can never

give a true and proper distinction of colours; so, in like manner, it is simply impossible that one who is under this vail, mentioned by St. Paul, in taking up the scriptures in a literal sense, can by no means come to distinguish their true and proper meaning, and far less enjoy the true sense, whereof they do consist.

Whenever this vail, of understanding or taking up the scriptures, in a literal sense, and these scales of thick or gross darkness, come to be removed, or fall from their eyes, then, and not till then, “ The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, “ and the leopard shall lye down with the kid, “ and the calf, and the young lion, and the fat- “ ling, together, and a little child shall lead them. “ And the cow and the bear shall feed, their “ young ones shall lye down together, and the “ lion shall eat straw like the ox, and the sucking “ child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the “ weaned child shall put his hand on the cocka- “ trice den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in “ all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be “ full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the wa- “ ters cover the sea.”

Further, before this happy period can possibly take place, there is another or second vail must, of necessity, be removed therefrom, viz. the vail of prejudice, with that of blind zeal, which hath not only over-shadowed, but hath almost altogether benighted the Christian world. This

vail of prejudice, and blind zeal, commonly ariseth from the prejudice of education, or by reason of being early educated under one or other of these different systems; for if there were five hundred various sets of Christians, they, without any authority from God, would generally have as many different systems of divinity; and each set would still be prejudiced in favours of their own system, and against every one that doth not coincide therewith; and whatever degrees of charity they lake towards one another, too many of which seldom come short in supplying its place, with the double portion of inevitable damnation, upon the account of their rejecting, and not receiving, what is contained in their system alone. And according to whatever light the scriptures come to be construed in each of their different systems; yea, though to the dishonour of God, by making him inconsistent with himself; this veil of superstitious prejudice will still prevent their taking up, and receiving the scriptures in any other sense, than what is already held forth and contained therein: for till once these dark veils of systematical prejudice, and blind zeal, be removed, Satan's kingdom, of necessity, will flourish by their iniquitous suppression of Christ's church; for these dark veils of systematical prejudice, and blind zeal, do not only refuse the liberty of knowledge, but also circumscribe, and lay an inhibi-

tion upon both the mind and the understanding, by which their souls become only slaves of men, shut up from the enjoyment and liberty of the sons of God. But when once this veil of indulged prejudice comes to be removed, and the scales of a blind zeal drop from the eyes of their understanding, then will that happy period take place amongst men, which naturally arises from the possessing a proper freedom, and enjoyment of their God.

C H A P. III.

Thoughts concerning persecution, and a blind zeal in judging of others.

AS a blind zeal (which is the source from whence persecution doth arise) is above all things most hurtful to the nature of true and undefiled religion, considering the many mischiefs that have arisen therefrom in the Christian world, which I apprehend is extremely offensive to God, because it is not only acting contrary to what he has commanded, but also a complying with the dictates of Satan, in shedding the blood of the innocent. Yet, such as are the patrons thereof venture to apply the sanction of God's authority thereto, and do not only pass under the name, but have the assurance to call themselves Christians, and also pretend to

be no less than Christ's best friends; yea, they do not only persist in what Christ hath forbidden, in judging their neighbours, or fellow Christians, for not holding the same opinions, or sentiments with themselves; but are willing to persecute them unto death itself, for conscience-sake. All such, without exception, by their actions, proclaim aloud unto the world, testifying, from whom they have, and hold their opinions in religion, that it is from the devil himself, who was a murderer from the beginning, and not from God, nor our Lord Jesus Christ, who declared, that he came, not to destroy mens lives, but to save them. These are they, who have taken the field, and have lifted up a standard for the devil, and have not only proclaimed, but have, as it were, declared and entered into open war against God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, in disobeying that which he hath commanded, (namely) That thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. But there is one thing most certain, that the soldiers must still obey, and be subject to those officers, whose servants they are; and when the devil bears the standard, he threatens with death such as would desert his colours.

Now this is exactly the case with all such who turn persecutors, which, in real speaking, are open and avowed enemies against God. For a zeal that vergeth towards persecution, (in being hurtful to one another, either in person, or ef-

fects) for different opinions in religion, is only the zeal of the devil, because not according to godliness. For as Christ's kingdom is not of this world, the weapons thereof, not carnal, but spiritual, to the pulling down of the strong holds of Satan. Now there is nothing more evident, than what appears from the above, that wherever such a zeal is to be found, that tendeth towards persecution, it is only from the devil, (whose servants they are) and not from God. Which zeal is always to be found with such as lay the highest claims to religion, witness the superstitious Pharisees, these blind zealots, who from a mistaken principle, put our Saviour to death, to fulfil their blood-thirsty desires. Hence there is nothing more evident, that in whomsoever this detestable spirit does reside, they are of their father the devil, who was a murderer from the beginning, and the works of their father they will do.

Again, there is a certain species of blind zeal, that appears pretty similar, and near a-kin to the above, which has not only seized, but has even almost, if not altogether, leavened a great many different denominations of Christians, each thereof vainly imagining that it is no less than the gift of God, which hath given them the true knowledge of their own system, to see how much more, it is not only valuable to them, but acceptable to him, above all others; although no-

thing more in the main, than a mere engine of the devil, invented not only for the dividing, but defacing of Christianity.

Some of these different denominations judge all such under damnation, that are not embarked in the same system and party with themselves. Others again judging, that all such, as do not hold, and sustain, what is contained in their system, are going on, and in the high way to damnation, and if continuing therein, that they cannot possibly meet with salvation. Thus they become one, in serving the devil, by despising and setting aside, that which God hath commanded, (namely) that "we should by no means judge our neighbour;" for the sense of the word one, in this place, meaneth only this, that they are one in consent or agreement, in serving the devil, in their judging of one another; for the doing of that which God hath forbidden, is only a serving the devil.

And as each of these different denominations most ignorantly dream, and falsely imagine, that they themselves (by reason of their superstitious tenets) are more in favour, and acceptable in the sight of God, than others; they will even, in a most fervent and zealous manner, recommend and press it home upon such, as those they meet with, of a different opinion and denomination, to go to God in prayer, that he may open up unto them the true knowledge of his will, which is

only comprehended in their system alone, independent of another, whereby they can be saved. And after this manner do these different denominations give and recommend their advices to one another.

Thus it is evident, to a demonstration, how much these have disobeyed the will of God, in judging the state of others, and also in the dividing of his kingdom, and oft-times thirsting for the blood of their fellow Christians. Such as these are not serving the true God aright, but are only worshipping a creature of their own mind, and an idol moulded to the dishonour of him that gave them a being. Now what is all this, but only, as a sacrificing to their own net, burning of incense to their own dreg, and a warming themselves at the sparks of a fire of their own kindling,

C H A P. IV.

Thoughts upon the invincible power of a prepossession got through the prejudice of education.

WHEN any person or persons, or even mankind in general, have had the misfortune of being educated and brought up, from their infancy and youth, under whatever different doctrines, opinions, or set of tenets, as all

mankind commonly are, in a more or less degree, which tenets, when once grounded therein, they become not only engrained, but entwisted, into their very natures, and as it were interwoven with their constitutions, so that the attempt to convince them of their mistake, and persuade otherwise, from these different tenets that they have already embraced in their youth, although they should be never so wretchedly mistaken thereby, and distant from the truth; it would be as vain as to teach a horse the principles of navigation, or the use of a reflecting telescope, for the making him to understand the number of Jupiter's satellites, (which are four) with all their different distances, and periods of their distinct revolutions, without they first come to lay aside that prepossession they have got, through the prejudice of education, and reason impartially with themselves, without which they can never properly judge, nor distinguish betwixt truth and falsehood. Therefore the attempt would be altogether unsuccessful, and prove abortive at last.

Likewise, is there any person so grossly wicked, as may not possibly, through pains, be convinced of the evil thereof, and reclaimed from his vices, if not arrived at such a pitch, as being in a state of confirmed devils. But when once men are early educated, and bred up, under whatever set of religious or superstitious tenets, especially if antiquated, it is next to impossible to convince,

reclaim, or deliver them therefrom. The reason why, because they actually believe, that the more strictly they adhere thereto, they are not only doing the greater service, but also, putting the more honour upon God; while, by the same, they are acting diametrically opposite to the very nature thereof; and not only this, but vainly imagining, that if they were to call in question, so much as one of these superstitious tenets, it would no less than incur the displeasure of God, and certify their damnation for ever. For an infallible proof thereof, see the Jews, who, through the blind zeal of their superstition, imagined they were serving God in putting our Saviour to death. But believe me or not, these, and such as these, are not the worshippers of the true God; but only of such, whose superstitious tenets they do not only sustain as just, but revere as infallible as from God himself.

Again, it is evident, and nothing more obvious, that in whatever principles the greatest part of mankind are educated, when in their infancy and youth, especially if ancient, though it were to cannonize the devil, and defame the Deity, by ascribing to him, such actions as are inconsistent with his nature, it would be held as sacred, and received as divine, by its different votaries, and the more antiquated, it would still become the more revered by the ignorant and superstitious devotee.

For an irreverfible proof of the above, (witnefs Popery) fee what numbers of families there are in Great Britain, upon whom there is no obligation, who have never, as yet, relinquifhed, or emerged out of that bigotted fuperftition, which is contrary to the whole tenor of the fcriptures, and even to common fenfe itfelf; and all this proceeds from nothing elfe, but from thefe principles being taught and inculcated upon them in their infancy and youth. For it is always the cafe, that there is none fo deaf as thofe who refufe to hear; nor fo blind as thofe who will not fee. And further, for evidence concerning this matter, we fee, how that from the effects of preposfeffion, got through the prejudice of education, they ftill fhut up themfelves againft all knowledge, but what they have already received in their infancy and youth, though never fo inconftituent with the nature and perfections of the true God. And that, in all thefe different deceits, whereby the various fpecies of religion are leavened with, from the very leaft degree of fuperftition, that hath been impofed upon the fimple, in their knowledge of the true God, by the doctrines of fallible men, down to him, that bows to, and worfhips a wooden deity; with fuch, it is *even* counted no better than facrilige itfelf, to call in queftion their doctrines or traditions; and the reafon why, becaufe they will not ftand the teft, but vanifheth away like fmoak. But this

is not the case with such as hold the simple and undefiled religion that is given by the true God; for when the same is tried, it will come forth like pure gold, and the oftner it is brought to the test, it will always shine the brighter, and with greater lustre.

What can I say more, but only that which was exprest by the Samaritans, saying, Our fathers worshipped upon this mountain, and so will we. But in answer to this, our Saviour replies, Ye worship ye know not what. Neither do those, nor such as those, who hold by the doctrines, traditions commandments, and nostrums of fallible men, as the articles of their faith, which must only be of men, and not of God. For it is generally the case with men to mould out systems of divinity, for the service of God, in such a light as best suits their own fancies, and the nature of their immoral desires; and instead of these systems being rectified by their successors, they will rather add thereto, in building system upon system, though to the utmost dishonour of the great God, and all the different perfections, wherewith he is possessed, than that they themselves should be regulated thereby.

Therefore I shall conclude this essay with the words of the wise man, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." So, in like manner, train up a child under whatever set of tenets, opinions, or

doctrines, good, bad, or indifferent, he will seldom, or never, be found to depart from them when he comes to maturity, or old age; and to call their opinions, tenets, &c. into question, or doubt of their veracity, would by their different votaries be accounted no better than sacrilege itself.

C H A P. V.

An advice to all such as are not yet swallowed up to that degree of superstition as to fall out with their best powers, they at first received from God,

IT is not my present design to write to such as are fallen and swallowed up under that enthusiastic gloom of Egyptian darkness, who refuse and deny the use of their rational powers, and are not only almost, but altogether proof against conviction. But I write on purpose, that, if possible, I may happily prevent such as have been preserved hitherto, who have never as yet fallen in, and received their superstitious nostrums, but have fled, and escaped without the precincts and suburbs of that dark city, to wit, Rome catholic, or mystical Babylon. For if men shall be so obstinate as to deny and suspend their reason, by shutting up these rational powers, they received from God, in which they are distin-

guished from the brutes that perish; yea, it is simply impossible, that ever they can attain to real and true knowledge; for as the Psalmist observes, that though man should arise to honour, wanting understanding, he is like the beasts that perish; and I am very much afraid, that there are too many of these kinds of beasts amongst us. And for men to deny their reason, and shut up the rational powers, or themselves from the use thereof; this is neither more nor less, than the beast throwing the man into prison; for the rational powers are the man, but the animal part, or powers thereof, is the brute. For it is only by making a proper use of these powers, that we come to be approved of by God; and by not improving, but in making a wrong use of these powers, we thereby are accused, and become both culpable and liable to punishment. For it is God's right to require actions of man, answerable to these powers, with which he has endued him; but man, by his iniquitously refusing of being capable to perform what is required of him by virtue of these powers, he thus falsely, in order to excuse himself, doth hereby dishonour God, who is requiring more than what he has ability to perform. And for man to assert, that he can do, no more than is required of him by God, by the use of these rational powers, of which he is already possessed, without an impulse of supernatural power, added thereto, it is just

in every degree as absurd, as to assert, that a clock, when completely finished in all its different parts, by the maker, and properly adjusted; in both weight and regulator, cannot possibly keep true time, without an additional weight added, to what was sufficiently necessary for that purpose. And for men to deny their reason, and shut up their rational powers, or themselves from the use thereof, in their depending to be acted upon by extraordinary operations, independent of reason, is no less than a despising of that candle, which God himself hath, as it were, lighted with his own spirit, and set up in the human breast; and the refusing thereof, reduceth all such to a level with Balaam's ass, who was acted upon in an extraordinary manner, without which operation he could never have done what he performed. But there was never any of mankind, that was really acted upon, in an extraordinary manner, that refused the use of these rational powers. But all such as deny reason, and the proper use of these powers, are not only half, but full brothers to Balaam; for we never heard, that he was at variance, quarrelled, or used his ass badly, till he was thrust upon the point of speaking reason. For Balaam was deaf, and set aside the reasoning of the ass, so have all such as are his brethren; they have rejected, and set aside the rational powers also. But though this ass was acted upon in an ex-

traordinary manner, this did never give him a right to become a rational creature; and, if not rational, though he transgressed the will of his master, he could by no means be accountable for his actions.

But I would have all such understand, that though God wrought a miracle upon this brute, viz. Balaam's ass, yet it by no means obliges him to work, in an extraordinary manner, upon such as he hath endowed with reason. For the rejecting of the rational powers gives them no right to impose upon God, in expecting from him such operations, because they are at enmity with that gift which God hath bestowed, in distinguishing them from the brutes that perish. Further, I cannot but observe, that such as are at variance with their reason, (viz. as to deny the use of these most noble powers and faculties that they have received from God,) on purpose that he may visit them with extraordinary operations, such appear to be greater brutes than Balaam's ass; for he never divested himself of what senses he was formerly possessed of, but received whatever more God was pleased to add thereto; and we never heard that he was acted upon a second time. And to be at enmity with these most noble powers and faculties, is to be at enmity with ourselves, and not only with ourselves, but with God, from whom they came, who is the original author and giver thereof; but such might have had respect

thereto for the giver's sake. And, for men to despise and reject these rational powers they have received from God, in order that they may be acted upon by extraordinary operations, is no less than a despising of God, who gave, and from whom they received them; and is just the same as with the rich man (*viz.* Dives) mentioned in the gospel, who made intercession with Abraham, that he would send Lazarus to his father's house, that he might testify to his brethren, and prevent them from coming into that place of torment; but Abraham answering, said unto him, "They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them. But he said, nay, father Abraham, "if one went from the dead they will repent. "And he answering, said unto him, if they hear "not Moses and the prophets, neither will they "be persuaded though one rose from the dead." So, in like manner, such as despise and reject the use of these valuable powers that they have received from God, on purpose that they might receive extraordinary operations, neither will they be profited though they were to be visited in an extraordinary manner. For if they reject and despise the first gifts that God has endowed them with, they cut off themselves from any right to look for a second. Hence there is nothing more vain than to reason with such who have laid aside their reason, or divested themselves of those rational powers; for without these, we

are nothing more than mere fools; and as it is most judiciously observed, that a fool is wiser in his own conceit than ten men that can render a reason. It likewise answers the very same with all such as have laid aside their rational powers, in expectation, (or as dreams,) of being visited with extraordinary divine operations. And it is generally the case with such; for they still imagine themselves wiser, and more in favour with God than all the world besides.

To conclude this chapter;—If the rational powers were only acquired by man, and not given by God, but were independent of him, then might they imagine them, and the actions arising therefrom, unacceptable unto him. But this is not the case; and whether men admit thereof or not, there is nothing can possibly come from God, but what must be acceptable unto him. Therefore, to despise and set at nought these powers, whereby we are distinguished from the animal tribes, this would be nothing less, than to despise and set at nought him who is the original author and giver thereof. Now, there is nothing can be more evident, than that a doctrine, not only taught, but also patronised, as an infallible truth, that man can do nothing that is acceptable to God, cannot possibly come from him, because to his dishonour, therefore must inevitably come from some other different spirit; because it doth not only cut asunder the bands of industry, but

does also encourage the sluggard in his sloth; and there is one thing most certain, that if man were incapable to perform an action acceptable to God, he could never possibly be punished, for not performing, because it would be unjust, and thereby make a fool, in every degree, as punishable for his actions as the wisest of men; but whether men believe it or not, there is nothing more certain; that it is only because we are capable to do the will of God, whereby we are accountable, and rewarded for doing, and punished for not doing; for this unalterable law proceeds from the nature of God, therefore surpasses the power of both men and devils to overturn.

But to conclude this advice, it is in vain, to reason with such, who despise the power and use of this faculty; for, as the devil will not admit of being ruled or bounded by reason, neither will such, who refuse and shut up themselves from the use of these powers which they at first received from God. For it is only by reason of the rational spirit being lighted up, and partaking of the Deity, that it does not perish along with the body.

C H A P. VI.

An infallible mark whereby we may know such as are swallowed up under the darknefs of superstition, by their being divided one against another.

I Shall next essay to make it appear, by an infallible evidence, set up as a land-mark, or light-house, to direct the mariner, by which he may safely steer his course, and be prevented from falling in with these dangerous rocks, upon which he is liable to be dashed in pieces. And, as they have not only in part, but almost altogether, misunderstood the true and real meaning of revealed scriptures, by taking them up in a literal sense; for it is clear to a demonstration, that although they have been bound together, by their favourite systems, as with so many wreathes of human invention, yet they are most wofully divided, and, as it were, dashed in pieces one against another, they being so wretchedly darkened, through the infatuation of their darling superstition, by reason of a blind zeal, wherewith they are seized. So that, by their present appearance, if the civil power were not to restrain their fury, they have as much ambition and fervency of spirit, to spread and enforce their different doctrines, with as great violence, as either Pope or Mahomet. Yea, I know to my certain know-

ledge, persons, who, through the infatuation of a blind zeal, plunged to that degree of enthusiasm, that they would rather chuse to deny their senses, and give up with ocular demonstration itself, before they will part with their darling superstition.

Again, I shall only repeat, for proof, the words expressed by our Saviour, as is recorded in the gospel: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." So, in like manner, by this shall all men know that ye are not my disciples, because of your strife and different divisions, when you bite and devour one another: "For the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you, will think that they do God good service." This is what hath been expressed by our Saviour himself.

From whence it appears, that there is none, but only such as are already fallen under the mist of such gross darkness, but what may clearly see and perceive the reality of these things.

And, for a further proof of this mistake, in their deceiving themselves, we see how many of these different denominations, that, in their dividing and setting up in parties, one against another, each of these parties most vainly imagining, that in so doing, they actually believe they are really serving and doing honour to God, when nothing more than a false conception, and mere deceit. This is most certainly the case, and the

woful consequence of their taking up the revealed scriptures in a literal sense, and not bringing them to that true and proper test, viz. the moral perfections of the true God. And it is only by holding doctrines inconsistent with the nature and perfections of the Deity, viz. his justice, his goodness, and truth, that hath made God to leave them, as a lasting monument of their folly to the world, in their dividing and dashing themselves in pieces one against another. Hence, there is little or no doubt, but the greatest part, of whatever denominations, could very easily dispense and admit of the scriptures being tried by this infallible test, so long as they keep clear, and only come to detect and expose the systems of others. But so soon as ever they find, that their own favourite system (though essentially wrong in itself) is in danger, and comes to be attacked, and the pillars thereof begin to tremble, they beg to be off; and immediately give the alarm, and cry out, that the church is in danger; each of these different denominations most vainly imagining, that the church is only contained within the circle of their favourite system alone, independent of every other system whatever.

C H A P. VII.

An advice to all such Christians as desire to be acquainted with the principles of true religion, that they may be aware of the different deceits that hath been intermixed therewith.

WE see how that John the Baptist was sent by God, in order to prepare and pave the way for introducing Christ and his religion into the world. In like manner, it may be said that such teachers as propagate and patronize an implicit faith to such a height among Protestants, by their taking hold of the literal sense of a few detached scriptures, for to support their authority; upon which faith they lay the whole stress of salvation, independent of what Christ hath required of us in the gospel; such as these are only missionaries sent out by the devil, in order to prepare and pave the way for the return of Protestants, that they may the easier be deceived, in their embracing of Popery. Yea, the chief patrons of these visionary doctrines, with various others, are the different sectaries, and such as adhere to their pernicious principles, which abound so much amongst us, at this present day, to which credulous Christians of weak minds, fall a prey, and thereby are ensnared, through their deceit. And by this implicit faith being delivered with such sanctity, it is thereby held in every respect as infallible, amongst such Christians, as from God himself. For it is in every de-

gree as impossible for Popery to exist, independent of an implicit faith, as for nature to exist of itself, independent of God. And it was only by virtue of this implicit faith, that such doctrines as are inconsistent with the nature and perfections of the Deity at first took place; Popery being thereby increased to that pitch, not only in doctrine alone, but also in ceremony, even unto such a degree of corruption which obliged our first reformers to give up therewith at last, who brought along with them the seeds of the said doctrines, to the hurt of reformation. For as the seeds thereof doth ripen more and more, towards their maturity; so, in like manner, do they also gravitate, in degree, towards their original centre, where they do not only meet again, but also unite and incorporate in one body together at last. For an implicit faith is the cause, but Popery is the inevitable effect produced therefrom, and likewise the infallible consequence thereof. And thus, through an implicit faith, they have reduced the Christian system, from what God hath required in the gospel, to that which is most suitable to their own perverse taste; but can any thing be more expressly declared, than what this is by our Saviour, where he says, that it is not every one that sayeth unto him, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but it is only they who doth the will of his Father which is in heaven. And also

again, he saith, elsewhere, in corroboration thereof, that whosoever doth the will of God, the same is his brother, his sister, and mother. From this it is evident, by Christ himself, that it is only such as do the will of God, who by living in obedience with what he hath commanded, that have a just ground to believe that they shall be accepted of him.

C H A P. VIII.

Considerations concerning the nature of our requests to God.

IT is said, that whatever we ask in prayer, we must ask in faith; it is also said, that whatever is not of faith, is sin. But we must of necessity be as careful of what we do ask, least we be found asking amiss. For if we should ignorantly come to ask what is unacceptable to God, we must certainly ask amiss; and though we should ask it, through the strongest faith, we ask amiss, and can neither be heard, nor accepted of him. Therefore, we may see from this how necessary it is to regulate all our different petitions, by bringing them up to this one infallible test, to wit, the nature and perfections of the just and true God; by which means, we may assuredly know, whether they will be acceptable to him

or not. For to offer up our prayers, in making our requests to God, for things of whatever kind, that will not agree with his nature and perfections, the same is an offence unto him. And although such prayers should be offered up with the greatest faith, and fervency of devotion, they are nothing more than an abomination to God; and, as speaking after the manner of men, like a smoke in his nostrils. Such requests are only the vain oblations of those, who measure out God through the mist of their own blinded prejudices, and who falsely imagine that he is altogether such a one as themselves; loving this sect or person, and for no cause; hating the other without reason; always ready, at their desire, to curse whom they curse, and bless whom they bless; delighting in unreasonable doctrines, such as are diametrically opposite to his justice, goodness, and truth. Hence all such petitions, as are answerable to the above test, are acceptable to God, and still gravitate to him, as their chief and original centre, where they rest steadfast and immoveable, so long as they continue to act agreeable to the foresaid. But again, on the other hand, all such requests as will not agree with the said test, are unacceptable to God, and for want, or this real, or true gravity, they can never arrive at him, as their proper centre, but evaporate away like smoke, in which there is but little specific weight.

Now, therefore, let us be aware against making our requests to God, for such things as will not correspond with the rectitude of his nature; but would make him changeable in his being, and thereby inconsistent with himself, which would be downright blasphemy. Lastly, there is one thing deserves our highest attention, which is this, where is the sect, or party, however grossly wrong in their sentiments, or opinions, but will petition God, that he may prosper them above all others; and also, where is that nation, when at war with another, but will publicly address and petition God, that he may prosper their fleets and armies, to the conquering of their enemies, each of them requiring God to serve them, not for the sake of truth, but only for their own selfish ambition, whether they be in the right, or in the wrong. But our requests ought to be directed after this manner, desiring that he may prosper, and be with us, so far only as we are in the right, and agreeable to truth, and no farther; and that error, falsehood, and injustice, may be detected, brought to light, and exposed by him, wherever it is to be found, whether in ourselves, or in those that are against us, for the reformation of the guilty. For except our petitions be agreeable to his nature, they can neither be accepted, or answered by him.

C H A P IX.

Reflections upon the nature of fasting.

I Shall only, at present, offer a few short considerations, as they come to hand, concerning the nature of fasting, which, I apprehend, may be sufficient for the illustration thereof. There is nothing more obvious than this, that it hath ever been the case, and still remains so, that all such as take hold of the shadow, in place of the substance, always flee for recourse to this supposed kind of service, not only believing, but also satisfying themselves therewith, still imagining, that there is nothing more acceptable in the sight of God, for averting his judgments, appeasing his displeasure, and gaining his favour, than this phantastical kind of service, there not being a more infallible evidence of the gross ignorance of any people, of whatever age, either ancient or modern. For proof thereof, witness the Jews, that the more they waxed wicked and forgot God, the more they reposed their confidence in this kind of ceremony, as is evident from their prophets. Also, as their wickedness increased, towards the end of that state, they reposed their confidence, more and more, in the letter of the scriptures. And having recourse to this partial piece of service, which is still increased, according to the blind zeal, or degree of superstition,

of any people, because inseparable therefrom. This being evident from the blind, and superstitious Pharisees, who boasted of their being more holy than others, because they fasted twice a week. This fasting being sustained by the Pharisees sufficient to satisfy for all their different deceits, and private wickedness, that took place within the limits of the said week.

Nor was this circumscribed to the Jews alone; no, for we see also, that in the Christian world, and second century thereof, how that Montan the heresiarch, who was a most rigid and strict disciplinarian in the circumstantial of religion, ordered a fast of no less than three Lents, in order that he might distinguish himself, according to the degree of his superstition. Nor does this supposed service stop here; but also gradually descends to the Popish world, where it abounds more and more still according to the degree of superstition they possess, their saints and holidays being almost without number. And likewise amongst Protestants, according to the degree of superstition and ignorance they labour under; this being held by all such as a sacrifice that is most acceptable to God, with which they please and satisfy themselves, in place of that which he hath strictly required, to wit, doing justice, and shewing mercy, with whatever he necessarily requires of us; as is evident from what follows. See Isaiah, chap. i. ver. 16. "Wash ye, make ye

“clean, put away the evil of your doings from
“before mine eyes, cease to do evil, ver. 17.
“learn to do well, seek judgment, relieve the
“oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the
“widow.” And, also the three following verses,
with part of the fifty-eighth chapter, from the be-
ginning, down to the end of the twelfth verse,
“Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a
“trumpet, and shew my people their transgres-
“sion, and the house of Jacob their sins. Yet
“they seek me daily, and delight to know my
“ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and
“forsook not the ordinance of their God: they
“ask of me the ordinances of justice: they take
“delight in approaching to God. Wherefore
“have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not?
“Wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou
“takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of
“your fast you find pleasure, and exact all your
“labours. Behold, ye fast for strife and debate,
“and to smite with the fist of wickedness; ye
“shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your
“voice to be heard on high. Is it such a fast
“that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict
“his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bul-
“rush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under
“him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an accept-
“able day to the Lord? Is not this the fast that
“I have chosen? to loose the bands of wicked-
“ness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the

“oppressed go free, and that ye break every
“yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hun-
“gry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast
“out, to thy house? when thou seeest the naked,
“that thou cover him, and that thou hide not
“thyself from thine own flesh? Then shall thy
“light break forth as the morning, and thine
“health shall spring forth speedily: and thy
“righteousness shall go before thee; the glory
“of the Lord shall be thy re-reward. Then
“shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer;
“thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am;
“if thou take away from the midst of thee the
“yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and
“speaking vanity: And if thou draw out thy
“soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted
“soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity,
“and thy darkness be as the noon-day. And
“the Lord shall guide thee continually, and
“satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy
“bones: and thou shalt be like a watered gar-
“den, and like a spring of water, whose waters
“fail not. And they that shall be of thee, shall
“build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up
“the foundations of many generations; and
“thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach,
“the restorer of paths to dwell in.” These,
with many more scriptures, to which they refer,
are sufficient to show what is meant by fasting,
in setting the same in a proper light. Hence is

it possible, that any thing can be more evident than what we have set before us, from these different citations, that fasting, and ceasing from labour, and bowing down the head like a bulrush, with dejected countenances, and also by sighing, and crying out against iniquity, in bewailing its abominations, these can by no means be acceptable to God, without the forsaking the same, by the reformation of our lives. For it is clear from this prophet, that what is meant by fasting, is only a ceasing from evil, (and not from labour,) in learning to do well, by the forsaking of sin, and living in obedience to the commands of God, as required in the above texts, to wit, such as doing justice, shewing mercy, relieving the oppressed, taking care of the widow and fatherless, feeding the hungry, cloathing the naked, undoing the heavy burdens, and in taking such as are cast out into places of habitation, that they may not be left to perish through the cold and inclemency of the weather. These, and the like, with what refers thereto, such as what is mentioned by Micah, saying, "What is required of thee, O man, but to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God." And also, Amos, chap. v. ver. 24. "But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream." These, with different others to which they refer, may suffice, in making us understand what is most acceptable to God, for the averting

his judgments, in order, that we may gain his favour, by living agreeable to his will. Thus, without a strict observance of the above, a ceasing from labour, and sighing for sin, as in putting on long faces, and melancholy countenances, such appearances as these can never profit us; for by these, and the like, we may well deceive ourselves, but we can never possibly deceive God; for God seeth not as man seeth, but beholdeth all things clearly; and though we should deal partially towards ourselves, God will not, but will render to every one according to his works; for we must all receive, according to the deeds done in the body, whether they be good, or whether they be bad. To conclude, we may justly infer from the above, that it is neither our dejected looks, nor disfigured faces, that will bring us into his favour, these being altogether unprofitable to gain our acceptance with God. And it is not our repenting, or mourning, by fits and starts, for sin, only, because we lack a further opportunity to commit more, as it is said of the crocodile, or alligator, after that he hath taken and devoured his prey, he mourns over it, till once he comes to meet with another opportunity, which no sooner appears, than he immediately taketh hold thereof.

Neither is it by putting off, and laying aside our good actions, (as is required of us by God) without our holiday-cloaths, that will recommend

us unto his favour, independent of what he hath commanded us, such as living in obedience to his will, all of these being nothing more than an abomination unto him, and as a smoke in his nostrils. I acknowledge, indeed, that some who delight in, and lay stress on the above service, may object and say; What, is he going to rob us of our fasts, or holidays, wherewith we serve and please God? In answer thereto, will God be pleased with any thing less, than what he hath required; for with such services we may well please and impoverish ourselves, but can never either possibly please nor enrich God. Yea, men, as observed before, are ready to do any thing to gain God's favour, but that only which is required of us, in order to procure it. They will even, upon occasion of danger, trouble, or distress, fast, sigh, and pray, or do any such like thing, on purpose to pacify their consciences; but they will not part with their darling sins, nor hearken to the words of the Lord, to live after his commandments, such as in leading a virtuous life. They will also conform to any outward ceremonies, instead of true piety; but not to the rules of virtue, as required of us by God. They will put on sackcloth, instead of the garments of righteousness and holiness, in order to gain their acceptance, and with such compliances they flatter themselves, they cannot only please God, but appease his anger. Yet there is no-

thing else but real virtue, or a good life, can possibly please the Deity; and all other things, however apt men may be to think otherwise, are of no worth in his sight; for hypocrisy, instead of being esteemed, is no less than an abomination unto him.

Further, we are not to imagine that our acceptance with God is to be effected by giving up with a few capital vices, such as are both scandalous, and unprofitable; but we must turn from every species of wickedness, if we would wish to live, and be found in favour with him. For as one leak, if not stopped in due time, will infallibly sink the ship; so will one vice persisted in, without repentance and amendment, as certainly exclude from heaven. Lastly, Neither are we to suppose, that all this alone will confirm our right, and gain our acceptance with God, so as to secure heaven in our favours. But we must also lay aside all manner of envy, prejudice, and revenge, and forgive them that trespass against us, and also do good to them that despitefully use us; for except we forgive them that trespass against us, we have no right either to seek or expect forgiveness from God; for it would be high presumption to retain envy, or prejudice in our hearts, against others, and yet go to God, and plead, that he may forgive us. For we must first from our hearts forgive them who hath trespassed against us, before we can justly desire, or plead with

God, to forgive us our trespasses. This we must consider aright, and ask no more forgiveness from God, for ourselves, than what we from our hearts have forgiven others, wherein they have trespassed against us. For God saith expressly, that except ye forgive them, that trespass against you, ye shall not be forgiven, but according as we forgive others, so shall we ourselves be forgiven of God. However opposite the above may appear to animal nature, it is by no means burthensome or grievous to them that know and love God.

For there is none that doth understand God aright, that will perform the aforesaid either from selfish views, or fear of punishment, but only from an innate principle, implanted by God in the mind of man in his first formation. For altho' such were to have no existence, beyond the boundaries of this present life, it would be as their meat and as their drink to do the will of God, their heavenly father, though this be not the case with every particular person, as we have God's warrant, and express command, agreeable to himself, to turn from our sins, and our evil ways, unto him; though this may be said to be an ingratiating us into God's favour, for our advantage, it can never be said to be selfish, when the whole thereof redounds to the glory of God, and to the good of society in general.

C H A P. X.

Reflections concerning what is divine revelation and inspiration, and what is not.

THE sense of the word scripture, or revelation, consists of a twofold meaning, to wit, ordinary, and extraordinary; under which sense both the Old and New Testament is contained; and the sense of each of these again comes under the meaning of either an ordinary, or an extraordinary inspiration. For it would be entirely inconsistent to imagine, that all scripture, to wit, such as different parts of the Old Testament, being of extraordinary inspiration, in which is only contained a chronology, containing only the account of different events, such as genealogies, the revolutions of states, battles, the rise and fall of kingdoms, and the like, which is no more, than what is contained in the history, and common records, of any civilized nation whatever. For it is neither to be supposed, nor expected, that every action of an inspired person, or such as hath been under inspiration, is to be sustained as infallible inspiration; for this would be no less than a making the cause to arise and proceed from the effect, and not the effect from the cause. But what is real, or extraordinary inspiration, is that which no other person can perform, or give any proper account

of, but only such as are under the same kind of impression of the divine Spirit; and this is an infallible rule, whereby we may easily come to distinguish betwixt extraordinary and ordinary inspiration, of which every person is possessed and endowed with, either in a more or less degree; and there is no production of what they call an inspired person, or one that hath been under inspiration, can properly come under the name of inspiration, but only that which hath been given, when under an immediate impulse of the divine Spirit; but at no other time can come under the title of inspiration, but that which is produced by the same impulse. And for us to say, that such were always inspired, and under the impulse and direction of the divine Spirit, it may, upon the same principles, be just as well affirmed, that each of them were, at all times, invested with a full power to work miracles to whatever degree, and at whatever time they pleased; which would be nothing less than a most palpable mistake, for if it were not, the apostle Paul, with others of like abilities, would never have been laid under that necessity, as to undergo such a scene of misfortunes, as they really did: For in working miracles, whether for themselves, or others, at whatever time they pleased, would have been a most convincing proof, to all without exception, of their commission being divine. From this it is evident,

that whatever they wrote, or spake, when from under the divine impulse, was no more than what was equal to what was writ or spoken by men of like common capacities or abilities with themselves. For it is vain to imagine, that all that is expressed by persons that have been inspired, is from God; for an evident proof of this, witness Balaam. There is no doubt but that he was inspired by God, there not being a more plain, certain, and elegant speech made in all the Bible, than what is delivered by him; and yet it can by no means be said, that Balaam was inspired by God, in what was expressed by him afterwards; for it is said, that he caused Israel to sin. Now it is clear, that God can by no means be the author of sin; therefore it is certain, that this inspiration was not from God. For when men speak by the inspiration of God's Spirit, they speak what comes from God; but when from under the impresson of his Spirit, they speak but like other men. But we are to try every thing by its quality, and by this rule we may certainly know whether it comes from God, or not. If it will not agree with the nature and perfections of the Deity, it is morally certain that it is not from God; and if what is spoken agrees therewith, to wit, with the nature of these perfections, it may be admitted to have come from him, even from whatever airth it may chance to proceed. For although Balaam be said to be a wicked man, his

words of truth were from God; for God is the author of truth. And although it should be said, that certain portions of scripture were delivered, when the persons that delivered them were at that time under the immediate impulse of the Spirit, this never certifies a continuation for a truth. But although this should be said to be the case, except what is delivered agree with the nature and perfections of the Deity, it is just as possible for nature to exist of itself, independent of the Creator, as that ever such could come from God; for this would make him divided against himself; which is impossible.

It must be acknowledged, that God hath bestowed extraordinary gifts, such as recollection, upon such as he saw proper, for reasons best known to himself. But to me it appears, that such scriptures as manifest the promises, and coming of the Messiah, and whatever is the will of God, for the reformation and instructing of mankind, it is certain, that they are of divine authority, and of more than ordinary inspiration, they being the will of God, revealed to us for the good of men. But in whatever books, or places, that are contained in the canon of the scriptures, wherein God is never so much as named, or pointed to, by our New Testament, as being contrary to his very nature and perfections, they appear to me, not to be of divine original, but only depend upon the sanction of

fallible men for their authority. But wherever they come to bear the impress of that divine image, with the different qualities belonging thereto, they require and demand our belief; and not only this, but it is also clear, from what is expressed by St. Paul to Timothy, that there were books, and parts in the canon of the scriptures, to wit, the Old Testament, that was not supposed, nor taken for inspiration. For instance, such as the xxth chapter of Jeremiah, from the beginning of the 14th verse, down to the end of said chapter; likewise the woman's authority to loose the shoe, and spit in the face of her brother-in-law, because he would not take and use her as his wife; and also many such things of like nature, besides these, improper to be mentioned amongst men. Is it possible, with respect to the woman's authority, that ever God would give men a revelation, in order to affront, and oblige them by force, in opposition to their will, to conform thereto? I indeed acknowledge such a revelation may be received by Papists and Mahometans; but all the sophistry in the world, that can possibly be advanced in its favours, will never make it to pass as authentic, by men of judgment, who have any just understanding of the true God. And likewise, though Jeremiah said, that the Lord had deceived him, and also cursed the day of his birth, he never meant, that God inspired, or gave him authority to express him-

self in such a manner. But the meaning thereof is neither more nor less, than that the person, who was delivering an account of what was expressed by the prophet, in his complaints against that people, who, like another faithful historian, records the prophet's own personal complaints amongst the rest. But though these different complaints be clashed together by the historian, we are by no means to imagine, that such inconsistent expressions could possibly come from God, though vainly received, as such, by ignorant men. What is here mentioned may suffice as a specimen of the many others; such as Elijah's mistake in accusing Israel, in supposing that he himself was only left alone, while there was yet seven thousand and upwards who had not so much as bowed the knee to the image of Baal. This, with others of like nature, are not to be understood in the same light with those, where he, viz. the Apostle, saith expressly, that all scripture, given by inspiration of God, is profitable for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; but he by no means saith, that all the different books and parts contained in the records of the Old Testament were inspired. I acknowledge, indeed, that, according to our translators, who, by supplying the word *is*, they would bring it all under inspiration. For they say that all scripture *is* given by inspiration of God; but the supplied word *is* hath nothing to

do with the original. Yea, I say again, that the original hath no connection with the supplied word *is*. For what immense difference would it make to say, all coins of gold in Great Britain, or to say all coin is of gold in Great Britain; the one makes no coin gold, but what is gold; but the other, by supplying the word *is*, advances all coins to gold, upon which the coin or stamp of Great Britain is impressed, even from the coarsest piece of metal, up to a piece of real gold, which, most certainly, would be no less than a palpable absurdity.

Again, to show the inconsistency in the supplying the word *is* in 2 Timothy, which is only supplied in our translation alone, but has no connection with the original, as has been already observed in the above. And, in order to put this in a proper light, that it may be the better understood, for instance, if it should be said, that all subjects of Great Britain worth ten thousand a year, are worth two hundred thousand Sterling of capital, and though there should not be above ten single persons in Britain that possess the said sum, it means no more in number. But if it should be said, that all subjects of Great Britain are worth ten thousand a year, and if there were ten millions of people in Britain, there is not so much as one single person in the whole excluded, but what is meant here by the word

is to possess the said sum, to wit, ten thousand pounds Sterling a year.

In further confirmation of the above, I shall here subjoin an extract of fundry learned commentators upon this text, the tenor whereof is as follows, to wit, *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, &c.* ‘ It is to be noted, that our translators here ‘ supplied the verb *is*, which greatly alters the ‘ sense here; and when that happens to be the ‘ case, no word ought by any means to be supplied; for the greatest errors may be built up- ‘ on the scriptures by this means. The true reading of the word here is, *all scripture, given by ‘ inspiration of God, (or divinely inspired) is profitable for doctrine, &c.* for the word *and* is not ‘ found in the MS. called Barb, nor in Clemens ‘ of Alexandria, nor in the Vulgar, Syriac, and ‘ Arabic versions, nor in Ambrose, nor in the ‘ Scholiast which goes under the name of Jerome, nor in Theodorus Mopsuensis, nor in ‘ Pelagius and others. And it is the opinion of ‘ learned men, that *and* was put into the text by ‘ some translator. It is a very different thing ‘ whether we understand Paul to say, *all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, &c.* or, *all scripture, given ‘ by inspiration of God, is profitable, &c.* But we ‘ may well doubt whether every part of scripture, separately considered, was given by inspi-

‘ration of God; nor does it appear that every
 ‘part is profitable for doctrine, &c. For exam-
 ‘ple: there are many chapters consisting only
 ‘of the names of persons; which, without ab-
 ‘surdity, cannot be supposed to be given by im-
 ‘mediate inspiration of God; nor does it appear
 ‘how they are profitable for doctrine, &c.—It is
 ‘therefore more reasonable to understand *Paul*
 ‘to say, *all scripture, given by inspiration of God,*
 ‘*is profitable for doctrine, &c.* thus the ancients
 ‘understood it; for the Syriac has expressed it,
 ‘every scripture, which is by inspiration from
 ‘God, is profitable for doctrine. And it appears
 ‘plain enough, that under the general title of
 ‘the scriptures of the Old Testament, are includ-
 ‘ed some books, which there is no reason to con-
 ‘clude were given by inspiration of God. That
 ‘the Apostle speaks here of the scriptures of the
 ‘Old Testament, is without doubt, because none
 ‘of the books of the New Testament were writ-
 ‘ten at the time when he wrote this epistle.’

Hence, does not this sufficiently show the im-
 propriety in supplying the word *is* in this text,
 by our translators, and what an infinite hurt the
 scriptures receive, or may be exposed to, and are
 liable of being brought under, by such, who, in-
 stead of their putting honour upon God, they
 dishonour him in the borrowing his name, and
 in ascribing the word sacred, or sacred authority
 of God, to things that will not weigh in the ba-

lance of his sanctuary, because they are of a quite opposite and different quality from the rectitude, the nature, and perfections of the Deity, to wit, his holiness, his justice, his goodness and truth. But to let the world know, that the borrowing such sacred titles, and applying them to such portions, as infallible, are only the actions of men, in every degree just as fallible as ourselves, who have no right, warrant, or authority from God, from what is revealed in the scriptures of his will to men, for any such thing: And whatever comes short of this quality, in complying and agreeing with the nature and perfections of the Deity, has no authority or right to receive the character, and bear the impression of that divine image, or to be counterfeited and stamped thereupon by fallible men, independent of God's authority; nor can ever possibly be admitted to any thing that is unworthy, or below himself. And for us to propagate, patronize, and hold forth, that God would reveal his will to men, as a precedent, in the way of religion, after such a manner as is inconsistent with his nature, is no less than a confounding the perfections of the Deity one with another. For the direction of his whole government, over his creatures, can never possibly be administered, but by the highest degree of rectitude, which infallibly must be divine.

Again, to obviate this, if it shall be said, all coins, in Great Britain, of the King's authority,

this means only, all true coins of proper weight and quality; but if it shall be said, that all coins in Great Britain, are of the King's authority, the word (*is*) includes all coins, whether light, corrupt or counterfeit, to be of his authority. If this were the case, that all were by the king's authority, no counterfeiter could be executed, for his forgery, as a criminal; but when once you remove the word (*is*,) there is nothing more meant, or included, than that all current coins, of a proper weight and quality, are by the king's authority. For it is not the image that giveth the quality, but it is only the quality that giveth a right to receive the impression of the image. Likewise, if one should take a piece of metal, the colour of gold, and impress upon it the coin of a guinea, in order that he may make it pass for the said value, so that by counterfeiting the impression he borrows the king's authority, to deceive his subjects. In like manner do all those that borrow and apply the sacred authority of God, by ascribing it to whatever is not of the above quality, to wit, his holiness, his justice, his goodness, and truth, that they may the better pass undiscerned, in the imposing upon, and deceiving of others. And as the counterfeit piece of gold, when once issued abroad, and insensibly falls into the hand of some person of credit, upon the faith of which, it still passes undetected; after the same manner do doctrines pass undetected, in what-

ever sense they please to apply the sacred authority of God thereto. Hence, for people to believe, and receive, all that is taken for, or brought under, the appellation of divine authority, or doctrines, to be divine, (such as will not agree with the above test,) because required by men just as fallible as ourselves, without the very least authority from God, it is no less than to cut off and sacrifice their reason at that infamous altar of credulity. Every thing is infamous, that is contrary, or inconsistent with the nature and perfections of the Deity, and a putting out of that candle, which God himself hath lighted and set up in the human breast. For there is nothing, but what agrees with this test, can have a right, or come under the authority of being divine. But whatever agrees with the above test, come from whom, or from whatever airth it will, has a right, both to be believed, and received, as the will of the true God. But it is not by binding up together, under one volume, things sacred, that will agree with the above test; and things that are not sacred, and will not agree therewith, though all canonized together, by fallible men. This will never make that which does not agree, nor giveth a quality, to receive the authority of God, it being what his revealed will in holy writ, never so much as requires of men. Neither is it by binding up a number of pieces of gold and copper together, in one bag,

that will give a right for the copper to be of an equal quality with the gold; for if both smelted together, the value of the gold will, in some measure, be lost, by mixing it along with the copper; and if turned into specie, the whole thereof will be detected, and condemned together.

Or if a small thread of gold should be entwisted with one, more, or whatever number of threads of worsted, of the same colour with gold, does this give a right for the worsted, because of the same colour, and entwisted therewith, to become gold? By no means. Neither doth the intermixing, and binding up together, things contrary to the nature of the Deity, with such as agree thereto, a right to become sacred or divine.

Thus, in binding up things that will agree, and things that will not agree together, in one volume, as sacred, or infallible, and to be received as such, hath been a mean to make numbers of the best and most penetrating part of mankind to give up with both, as unworthy of God. For although the devil be canonized, as a god amongst the Indians, this never gives him a right to become a god, and far less the true God. Neither does mens canonizing things that are not sacred, along with things that are sacred, give them a right to become sacred and divine. Hence, by mixing things that are not sacred, along with such that are sacred, and not only requiring the unreasonable belief, but even receiving their au-

thority as divine, has been, above all things else, the most hurtful to all true religion, and hath been, in a manner, the chief cause of defacing Christianity in the world. Answerable to the above, see how wisely it is expressed by our Saviour, that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. And it is also most strictly to be observed, that it is not the canonizing, nor the bare assertion of fallible men, that will give such things, as will not agree with the above test, a sufficient quality, and authority from God, to be received as divine. For instance, see such a piece of notorious falsehood, as was committed by Jacob, and Rebecca his mother, who most iniquitously deluded Isaac, in order that they might the better accomplish and bring about the deceit, in defrauding his brother of that estate, intended to have been given him by his father, and however falsely men may ascribe the direction thereof to God for sanction, the amount of which is no less than to prostitute his will, and thereby make it a precedent for the worst of villanies; such as children desiring parents to disinherit their brothers. This, with others of like nature, we cannot be too much aware of. Again, it may also be observed, that whenever we either hear or read of a commission, that is said to have been given or come from God, whether by vision, or any other manner, that requires the slaying or putting to death children, such as infant and suckling, with

adults, for their transgressions, we have no right either to believe or receive it as divine: for although both angels and men should (under colour or pretence of miracles,) falsely ascribe his authority for the performance of such actions, the requiring of them could never possibly come from God. The innocent, I acknowledge, may indeed suffer along with the guilty; but to say that God commands to slay, or put them to death, by way of punishment, is grossly absurd; therefore can never possibly, without impiety, be ascribed to him.

Again, neither are we to suppose that all and every particular book and passage contained therein which pass under the appellation of scripture is to be understood as divinely inspired, and come from God; for an infallible proof of which, how many different churches do we find in the Christian world, whose sentiments are entirely divided concerning this matter? Some of these churches rejecting not only different portions, but whole books together; others, again, receiving all into the calender of their belief, as divine revelation, the Apocrypha not excepted. Now is it possible that any of these different churches can produce an infallible evidence for the infallibility of such a positive belief? No, it is not. Hence we are often times directed by the margin of the New Testament unto the Apocrypha; but we find whole books contained in the Old

to which the New hath not one syllable of reference. Now if they reject this to which the New Testament doth refer, why not those to which it doth not refer. But it is commonly the case that the more ignorant any church or people are, the more will they receive as infallible that which is canonized by the sanction of fallible men. This ignorant or blind zeal of receiving all as divine was never at greater height than when Popery was at the highest pinnacle of her ignorance and corruption. For instance, the learned Spigelius, bishop of Upsal, a man worth being distinguished for his superior knowledge; who, for asserting that the earth was a globe, and that there were antipodes, and because they could find no proof or part thereof in scripture, he was put to death, and suffered martyrdom at the stake, by that inhuman, barbarous, and ungodly crew. And also, is it not said that the Lord reproved Job's three friends, saying, that his wrath was kindled against them, because they had not spoken of him aright, like that of his servant Job. Now is it possible that any such thing can come from God, where he openly declares his disapprobation thereof, as not being according to him? No. But there is nothing can possibly be so gross, but what men may falsely and impiously ascribe the sanction of his authority thereto as divine.

Now, it is evident from the above, that some

from an ignorant weakness have ascribed all to be inspired, or revealed by God, from the first of Genesis, to the last of the Revelation, and for confirmation thereof, they add the authority of what is prefixed to the end of the Revelation, to wit, the adding, or taking therefrom, with all the different plagues, or anathemas annexed thereto. But what is expressed here, at the end of that book, means no more, than what is barely contained in the book of the Revelation alone, independent of any other book besides.

It may indeed be objected, that if God is to act, in the revealing of his will, by no other method than what is agreeable to the nature of his moral perfections, this is no less, than to circumscribe the power and will of God, beyond which he is not to pass. But in answer thereto; is this any thing more, than what God himself hath already declared, saying, that he is holy, he is just, and he is good; and that he is God, and changeth not, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. But to imagine, and expect, that God will act by any other rule than what he hath already declared, is no less than to sacrifice the perfections of the true God, for the sake of their immoral desires in order that they may the more easily take place, (to wit, the foresaid desires,) as in making God to contradict himself, in his condemning the one day, as unjust, what he had held and approved of as just and right, in the

former; which blemishes are only incident to the frailties of human nature, by reason of their near connection with the animal part, and when acting contrary to the will and rectitude of the true God. To illustrate the above, I shall here insert the sentiments of a most judicious author, who sayeth as follows, ‘ For if the records of this
‘ revelation are supposed to be the revelation itself, the least defect discovered in them must be
‘ fatal to the whole. What has led many to overlook this distinction, is that common phrase,
‘ that the scriptures are the word of God, and in
‘ one sense they certainly are; that is, they are
‘ the sacred repository of all the revelations, dispensations, promises, and precepts, which God
‘ has vouchsafed to communicate to mankind;
‘ but by this expression we are not to understand,
‘ that every part of this voluminous collection of
‘ historical, poetical, prophetical, theological, and
‘ moral writings, which we call the Bible, was
‘ dictated by the immediate influence of divine
‘ inspiration: the authors of these books pretend
‘ to no such infallibility. And if they claim it not
‘ for themselves, who has authority to claim it
‘ for them? Christ required no such belief from
‘ those who were willing to be his disciples. He
‘ says, ‘ He that believeth on me hath everlasting
“ life,” (John vi. 47.) But where does he say,
‘ he that believeth not every word contained in
‘ the Old Testament, which was then extant, or

every word in the New Testament, which was to be wrote for the instruction of future generations, hath not everlasting life? There are innumerable occurrences related in the scriptures, some of greater, some of less, and some of no importance at all; the truth of which we can have no reason to question; but the belief of them is surely not essential to the faith of a Christian. I have no doubt but that St. Paul was ship-wrecked, and that he left his cloak and his parchments at Troas; but the belief of these facts makes no part of Christianity, nor is the truth of them any proof of its authority. It proves only, that this Apostle could not, in common life, be under the perpetual influence of infallible inspiration; for, had he been so, he would not have put to sea before a storm, nor have forgot his cloak. These writers were undoubtedly directed by supernatural influence in all things necessary to the great work which they were appointed to perform. At particular times they were enabled to utter prophecies, to speak languages, and to work miracles; but in all other circumstances they seem to have been left to the direction of their own understanding like other men. In the sciences of history, geography, astronomy, and philosophy, they appear to have been no better instructed than others, and therefore were not less liable to be misled by the errors and prejudices of the times

‘ and countries in which they lived. They related
‘ facts, like honest men, to the best of their know-
‘ ledge or information; and they recorded the di-
‘ vine lessons of their Master with the utmost fi-
‘ delity; but they pretended to no infallibility;
‘ for they sometimes differed in their relations,
‘ and they sometimes disagreed in their senti-
‘ ments. All which proves only, that they did
‘ not act or write in a combination to deceive, but
‘ not in the least impeaches the truth of the reve-
‘ lation which they published; a diamond, though
‘ found in a bed of mud, is still a diamond, nor
‘ can the dirt which surrounds it depreciate its
‘ value, or destroy its lustre.’ Again, as doctor
Bentley most justly observes, ‘ That the best way
‘ not to be mistaken, is to admit all for divine
‘ scripture, that tends to the honour of God, and
‘ the good of mankind, and nothing that does
‘ not.’

Hence, we see from these authors, that what is not of a proper quality to bear the image of God, is not sufficient to be received and accepted of as divine revelation. I know, indeed, that the resisting of whatever is not of a proper quality to receive and bear the image of the true God, will, no doubt, give offence to all such as are ignorant, and know nothing of real and true religion, in whom the spirit of persecution resides, because entirely ignorant of the nature and qualities of divine truth, and, through a

blind zeal, persecuting, in a more or less degree, and some even to death itself, because not receiving what was inconsistent with the nature of the true God. For instance, see the court of Inquisition, there was never a piece of greater cruelty, or grosser barbarity, conceived and invented, under the canopy of heaven, which they draw from, and found upon the nature of the last judgment, and also take, for their example, the state of the great tribunal, to confirm their authority. To this they apply and counterfeit the name of the true God, for the authority thereof, that they may the better couch all this great degree of wickedness, so that even hell itself is not capable to exceed.

And it hath also been the case under the state of both the Old and New Testament, that whatever was the desire and will of the priests, tho' their actions were never so wicked, and dishonourable to God, so as to have arrived at the highest degree of cruelty, (and inconsistent with the nature and rectitude of the Deity,) yet they were never the least abased, to ascribe the requiring thereof to the sacred name of God, for their authority, in putting their actions in execution. This is too probable, from what may be observed; so that if the priests should have pretended, that God required of the people, to serve or worship the devil, it would have been performed, as is evident from their idolatry; and

not only this, but if the priests orders were disobeyed, there were neither urims or thummims to be found in their favours; witness Saul, who was not only deprived of the benefit thereof by Samuel, but also stripped him of the kingdom itself. Now, what shall I say more, but only this, that the world hath been held under priestcraft, to the dishonour of God, by their presumptuously assuming his authority for whatever they thought proper to put in execution. Yea, this has too often been the case amongst the aforesaid priests, who have attributed it, as a divine service, under the name of what is required by God, (and as acceptable to him, when performed, as all the rest that he hath commanded,) even such acts of cruelty, that the human world itself was not capable scarce to exceed: and all this done under a pretence of being acceptable to the divine will; and, if not performed, it would no less than incur the perpetual displeasure of God, and certify their damnation, upon the neglect thereof. How often has this kind of service been made to assume the place of true and moral virtue, so that the greatest acts of cruelty, that ever were committed, under such authority, were always required by the priests, as a service done to God, and acceptable to the divine will? For instance, see Samuel his ordering Saul to go and smite the Amalekites, and utterly destroy all that they had, and spare them not, but slay both man, woman,

infant, and suckling; all of which was only for a supposed fault of their ancestors, defending their own property, near five hundred years before that period; and for not bringing Israel victuals, when he came out of Egypt. Thus they were to slay not only a people for a supposed injury, but also both infant and suckling, who had never so much as heard thereof, therefore were altogether ignorant of the supposed offence; an action, (though it had been wrong,) which their posterity could, by no means, either foresee or prevent. This, no doubt, is infallibly a most shocking theology, in ascribing God's authority, for the performance thereof. But we are not to imagine, that if God intended to cut off a people, of his being so weak as to have stood in need, for his assistance, either of a Samuel or a Saul to execute his judgments; for an infallible evidence thereof, witness the Assyrian army, which was all cut off in less than the space of one night. And whatever orders were issued out by the priests, (though nothing could possibly be more unjust or ridiculous,) if disobeyed, and not executed according to their desire, they still took recourse to personate the divine authority, saying, that he commanded, and would do so and so, if not performing what he required; by which means they took the advantage of the people, who, by their ignorance, were made to believe that they were doing the will of God,

though, at the same time, acting diametrically opposite thereto; and, by their presumptuously assuming the said authority, they seldom came short in bringing about their designs. This is what was inseparable from the initiated secrecy of the priests, whether under the name of a true or false God. But it is simply impossible, that any religion whatever, whether natural or revealed, can be pure and acceptable to God, while they encourage, and admit to remain therein, such doctrines, actions, or tenets, as are inconsistent with the nature of the Deity, and diametrically opposite to the perfections of the true God. So that, in their ascribing the sacred name, and authority thereof, to such vanities, they have not only bewitched the people, but have also divided the Christian world into so many pieces as it now is. And from such acts of wickedness being ascribed to the name and authority of the true God, it makes me not only apprehend, but even to believe, that if ever the devil underwent a probationary state, as he certainly did, it appears, from his different achievements, that he surely behoved to have been a priest, by reason of his masterly abilities, that he is possessed of, to deceive the world. For it is generally the case, that the more education, when attended with experience, and turned unto a wrong channel, gives rise to the greater degree of danger, by not only having, but too often

exerting, their power, to bewilder the credulous part of mankind. Again, as I have already observed, in the above, that numbers of mankind have turned deists, by reason of such corrupt and absurd glosses put upon so many different texts of scripture, by ignorant teachers, even glosses altogether inconsistent with the very nature and perfections of the true God, viz. such as his justice, his goodness, and truth. Yet, although some different texts may be liable, in a literal sense, of being brought under ever so gross and absurd constructions, by ignorant men, with different other places of scripture, though they should have little or no marks of divine authority, by want of the image thereupon; this is no sufficient authority why we should give up the scriptures; especially with whatever carries such lively impressions of that divine image; for, wherever this image is to be found, under its essential qualities, we are bound, by nature, to pay a proper respect thereto. But yet there is one thing we must still be aware of, not to imagine that the image adds value to the quality, in things essential; but it is only the quality that gives an intrinsic value and right to the image. For though I should have got some quantity of coin into my pocket, in way of value, and although the greatest, or whatever part of it should be counterfeit, and of a bad quality, would this be sufficient for me to throw it all away together

without examination, and not to separate the good from the bad? Certainly not; but ought to preserve the good with safety, as valuable. For if corrupt coin requires to be picked out and separated from good specie, it is certainly more necessary to separate whatever is not of a proper quality to receive the impression and image of the Deity, from things that are divine. Hence my serious advice is this, that I would have all persons whatever extremely cautious in what light they understand, and take up the meaning of the scriptures, with the different doctrines and opinions built thereupon. For it is simply impossible, that ever God required a belief, or revealed his will to men, in any other light than what is agreeable to the nature of his divine perfections, whereby he maketh himself known. For if we impute to God, that it is possible, he either may, or will reveal himself, in the making known his will to men, after any other manner than what is agreeable to the rectitude of his divine nature, we impose upon God, and not only upon him alone, but more especially upon ourselves at last, in putting dishonour thereon, by our making him to act inconsistent with himself.

Again, it is also said in the scripture, that David was a man according to God's own heart; and therefore, whatever is said or expressed by David, is all to be sustained as infallible, and of

no less authority than it were from God himself. But this will not hold; for what is said concerning David, that he was a man according to God's own heart, means no more, than that he was a fit and proper person for the ruling of that nation, or people, to wit, Israel, and who also was a man that feared God and loved righteousness, though he came short of the perfection thereof.

For was David's adultery and murder, thirsting after blood, and coveting the right of his neighbours, according to God's own heart? No, certainly not; for God can never be the author of sin, nor repent upon account thereof, as David. And thus, by not taking up the scriptures in a just and proper light, we dishonour God. And I know nothing can be more dishonourable and offensive to God, than to forge his authority, in applying the word sacred to whatever may come under the appellation of inspiration, or doctrines that are inconsistent with the rectitude, nature, and perfections of the Deity. For instance, would not a person of character take it very much amiss, and be highly offended, if any man, or number of men, should use the freedom to forge, by signing his name, and using his authority, to any thing that was immoral and inconsistent with justice, or against the laws of his country. Therefore, must it not be more offensive still, to apply the word sacred, in the name and authority of the great God to whatever

things as will not agree with his nature and perfections. And for an infallible evidence of the above, the scriptures themselves require no such meaning, it being only assigned thereto by the authority of as fallible men as ourselves. And it would be nothing less than downright blasphemy to adjoin the sacred authority of the true God to what is not of the above quality.

Again, we are to receive and esteem revelations, only according to the degree they resemble him to whom they are ascribed for their author. For instance, if we were to take David for our example, would we take his murder and adultery for our imitation, equal with our imitating him in his delight to live agreeable to the law of his God; the one would redound to our everlasting misery, but the other to our eternal happiness. Therefore, is it not our duty, to take every thing that is good of a person for our pattern, and not that which is bad? So, in like manner, we ought to take every thing that is good for revelation, such as bears a proper resemblance of the Deity; and what is opposite thereto, we ought not to receive as divine. For there is nothing can possibly come from God, but what is entirely like himself, of a piece with himself. Yet a weak and credulous world will receive, and believe, that such portions of scripture, or doctrines of men, came from God, though not agreeable to his nature.

But it is high time that all such turn, and give up with these lying vanities, by receiving and resting upon nothing but what will stand the test before God. Further, if we should be denied the liberty to call in question, as in bringing what we call inspiration and revelation up to that divine test, in order that we may try and prove their authority, whereby we may know whether they will agree with the nature and rectitude of the true God or not. If this is refused, there is no other proof remains for us, whereby we can possibly know, whether a revelation is given by God, and comes from him or not. And if we are only to receive religion upon the authority of men, independent of the above test, there is no religion whatever that comes under the name of revelation, that we have a right to reject, the Mahometan not excepted. For there was never a book received an equal, or greater sanction, amongst men, for its authority, than the Alcoran. It being said to have been wrote by God himself, and sent by him from heaven, amongst with the angel Gabriel, who delivered it to Mahomet, where it is still held in such esteem amongst that people; so that if a Christian or Jew were so much as to touch it, they are to be put to death, or even a Mussulman himself, who, with unwashen hands, if he touch it, is likewise to be put to death. From this it is evident, that, by removing the said test, all religion whatever, by

receiving the sanction of men, in their ascribing the same to God, as to have been given, or delivered by him, for their authority, (yea, however gross,) becomes of equal weight, and lays us all on a level in religion one with another. Again, if it be necessary, lest of our being deceived, that we try and inspect the quality of every species of coin, whereby we trade one with another, is it not more necessary still, that we try and inspect the quality of every species of religion, or revelation, or doctrine that is said to have come from God, whereby we trade with him, it being upon the reality of which, that our eternal interest, happiness or misery, depends, lest that we come to be deceived thereby, or disappointed thereof, and perish at last. Again, for to judge properly of things that are divine, it being highly evident, that whatever doctrines are against, inconsistent, and will not agree with the different qualities of the divine Being, yea, although that they, viz. such doctrines, should be said to have for their authority, that they were not only sent from heaven by God, but even attended by legions of angels, delivered also by the power of miracles, and likewise to have received, for their confirmation, the testimony of the whole human world for the authenticity thereof, as a proof of their original being divine; it is just as possible, that nature could take place, and exist of itself, independent of the great Creator, as it is possible that such

doctrines can either come from, or be given by God; the reason why, being this, because of their making God a being divided against himself, which is impossible, as is evident from what one saith that is divine, (to wit, our Saviour,) that whatever is divided against itself cannot stand, or be of long duration, but must of necessity soon come to an end. Yea, I say it again, that to suppose it possible, that God would, by the direction of his will, reveal to men, for the regulation of their lives, such things as are altogether inconsistent with the nature and perfections of the Deity, may, upon the self-same principles, be supposed possible for the creature to give being to the Creator, as to suppose it possible, that God will act inconsistent with himself. And to represent God in a different light, contrary to the above test, so as to impose upon or require the belief thereof from others; all such may certainly be supposed the enemies of the true God, because not only destructive, but also putteth an end to all true religion. How often do they suppose, that in ascribing divine authority to such things as are not morally good, and will not agree with the foresaid test, in so doing, they imagine that they put honour upon the divine Will, by which they will gain his favour. But in all this, it is evident, they dishonour God; and nothing can be so great a support to moral goodness, as true religion; on the contrary, there is nothing that can possibly be so de-

structive of it, as false and unworthy conceptions of the Deity.

Again, it is morally certain, that though the gospel hath been confirmed by the power of miracles, yet we are to receive no religion, nor doctrine whatever, though delivered and attended therewith, except they agree with that infallible and divine test, to wit, the nature and perfections of the true God. For whatever religion, doctrine, or opinions, though attended with the greatest of miracles, if they will not stand this test, they are not from God, but from some other different spirit, set up against, or in opposition to him, in order to counterfeit that which is divine; and without bringing up all different religions, doctrines, or opinions, to this infallible test, there is none of them but what may pretend, and father upon or claim God for its author. But as for myself, I do not only abhor, and detest, but even despise all such things, as either in the way of worship, doctrine, or articles of faith, that make God inconsistent with himself.

Again, yea the finest of metals, whether gold, silver, or the like, may be corrupted, by the chymist; but the diamond is of such a quality as is proof against the power of adulteration; they may, indeed, tarnish or sully its lustre, but its quality can never possibly be corrupted thereby.

So in like manner, whatever actually comes from God may, no doubt, be tarnished or sullied by the perverse doctrines of men; but can never possibly be corrupted in their nature, because they being of such a quality as is not only proof, but invincible, against the power of adulteration, as to intermix with the perverse doctrines of men. For every thing that bears a proper resemblance and impression of the nature of that divine image, from whatever airth it comes, is from God; for I receive nothing barely, for its character alone, but only for its qualities, of which it consists; and if it will not agree therewith, I pay no respect thereto; and though others should receive them, for their character, independent of their quality, it makes nothing to me; and in all this I have acted from nothing else then real and entire principle, to point out, and set aside whatever hath, or may be falsely imputed to God as divine, and to esteem as valuable whatever hath been represented and set forth in a just and proper light.

Further, I shall here point out one simple evidence, which will infallibly determine upon whose side truth lies, being this: There is not one single controverted point attacked in this performance, but what I have made it fully evident of its being inconsistent with the nature and rectitude of the true God. But let these my antagonists point out one article (I have

taken, in order to condemn theirs) that strikes against, or is inconsistent with the nature of God. This being sufficiently evident of itself, before both angels and men, to decide the contest that depends betwixt them (to wit, my antagonists) and me. In all this, I only understand or suppose God to be nothing but what he really is. But such as these do not only oblige, but perversely subject the nature of God, to comply with whatever doctrines agree with the nature of their immoral desires. But there is still one remedy remains, to which they are indebted above all others, namely, that whatever will not admit of being brought up, and weighed by the nature of God, they are never at a loss in bringing down and subjecting the nature of God to comply with it, in order that it may serve as a cover thereto, and the better pass undiscerned amongst men.

Some may indeed object, saying, What is all this? it is no less than a making light, not only of our systems of divinity, but also a great part of revelation; and will not God be displeased for setting them aside, as of no value. In answer thereto, if two different subjects of a certain good king, one of them doth not only alledge, but also assert, that whatever came, or was given in his majesty's name, was infallibly to be sustained as from him: The other replied, we are to receive nothing that strikes against his digni-

ty, but only what keeps up the honour of his majesty. In order to show the impropriety of the one, and propriety of the other argument, the former may as justly affirm, that if two persons should be joined together in marriage, and because guilty of a certain transgression, his majesty, because being his subjects, may lawfully take, and put to death every one of their children, in way of punishment, not for their own, but only for the fault committed by the parents, before ever one of the said children was born; and besides this, may require as much labour of each of his different subjects, in the space of one day, under the pain of death, as is sufficient for them to perform in the course of a whole year; these, with different other things, of like nature, he affirmed, were no more than what was the right of his majesty. The later refused, and said it was no less than a piece of the highest presumption, to ascribe such unworthy actions to so good a king, because unjust; as they could neither possibly be imputed to him, nor yet committed or required by any but a mere tyrant. If these two different characters should be represented to his majesty, which of them deserved his approbation? Surely, he that represented him under the character of a good and just sovereign; and not he that held him forth, because possessed of absolute power, performing only the part of a tyrant.

So, in like manner, whether do they who represent God acting as a good, just, and rightful sovereign, or such as represent him acting under the form of a tyrant, to wit, in punishing the innocent, upon account of the guilty; likewise requiring more of his creatures than what they are capable to perform; and also making creatures, upon no other account, but in order to torment them, as one who delighted therein? Which of these two is most to the honour of God, or has the greater ground to expect and meet with his approbation, the one that kept up the honour and character of his justice and truth, or him that did not? Certainly the former, and not the later. Hence, is it possible, that such, who make it their study not only to act up to the estimation, but also to preserve the honour and dignity of him who is the author thereof, can be condemned therefore, or should not meet with his approbation? No, not possible. But it is generally the case with rebels, that they will rather chuse to perish before they will either submit or comply with what redounds to the honour of their sovereign.

In like manner, it fares very much the same with too many of mankind, they will rather fall a sacrifice to what they have already received, though it should be to the dishonour of God, than submit, and comply, with what redounds to his honour and dignity, if not agreeing with

their hypothesis. For when once men take to the highway, in order to make gain, or support their extravagance, they will not regard at whose expence, whether of life or substance, it be attained. In like manner, when once men are resolved to adopt whatever system, doctrine, or hypothesis, they will maintain its authority, though it should be at the expence of all the different perfections of the Deity. The former are only robbers of men, in order to maintain their villanies; but the later are robbers of God, by making him unjust, in support of their perverse opinions. Thus the one is inseparable from the other.

Further, it is evident that people generally measure out God in such a light as best suits with their own disposition; and also adapt their religion to what is most suitable thereto. Good persons model their religion by the nature and rectitude of the true God; but such as are otherwise disposed model both the Deity, and their religion, to what is most agreeable with their own inclination. But such as are unjust, unmerciful, rigorous, implacable, unforgiving, once offended, never to be appeased, with less than full, or more than complete satisfaction, measure out God, and their religion, conformable to their own disposition: In which light he is not only held forth, (by them) but they also require the unreasonable belief thereof from others. Thus,

instead of representing God as the best of all other beings, he is rather set forth, by such, under the form of a mere tyrant, to rule with rigour, exclusive either of justice, goodness, mercy, or truth; and by this they commonly adapt their religion, agreeable to the nature of their own perverse desires. But he that founds his religion upon the nature and perfections of the Deity, is like one that builds his house upon a rock. On the contrary, he that builds his religion upon the doctrines of men, independent of the above foundation, is like one who founds his house upon the sand, or marsh, so that when the building comes to be inspected, and the foundation searched, the contractor thereof begins to tremble, and because it being found insufficient, is condemned as altogether unprofitable. Therefore, the whole of his expence and toil, in raising the said structure, must go for nothing at last. In this the one circumstance is not only similar, but is even inseparable from the other.

Further, it is to be observed, that there is no doctrine whatever, (believe me or not) although the whole human world should falsely ascribe thereto the authority of that which is divine, for its authenticity, that except it be of such a quality as to coincide with the nature and perfections of the Deity, it can never possibly come from God.

Lastly, and to conclude, it may also be observed, that as it hath been most wisely expressed,

and commanded by Moses, Deut. chap. xxiv. verse 16. "The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers, every man shall be put to death for his own sin." This, with whatever texts of scripture refer thereto, being founded upon justice, may be received as divine. But when it is said, as in many other different places, that he commanded to cut off, not only adults and children, but also both infant and suckling, for the sin of their ancestors. Now, is it possible, that ever these, and others of like nature, could have come from God? No. For it is, in every degree, as possible for heaven to dwell with hell, and nature to give being, and exist independent of him, as it is possible for a just God to contradict himself. For if it were possible for him to require the putting to death of children, by way of punishment, for the offence of parents, or sin of their ancestors, this would be no less than to pull down and destroy the one day, what he had expressly commanded the other. Yea, I repeat it again, that to ascribe such vanities to God, is just as much as to affirm that he had forgot in the one hour, what he required in the other; else it behoved that there was no such thing, as that either virtue or vice existed in a world. But however light thou mayest look upon it, be assured, that for all these, and others of like nature, God will bring thee to judgment.

I shall now wind up the whole of this chapter with this short reflection: Whatever people may falsely surmise to themselves, of their acceptance with God, it is only the innate principle of the mind, and actions proceeding therefrom, by which we shall be judged, and receive our sentence from him, either of approbation, or condemnation; and as for the external part of our religion, it serves only as a testimony of what we profess one to another; for the quality lyes only in the internal part of religion, and not in the external; for the latter is no more than the stamp impressed on the coin, or quality, whereby it may the better pass current, from one person to another. For as every nation receive their coin, by its impression, so do they also their religion, according to whose authority they ascribe for it. As ignorant people value the worth of their coin, upon account of its stamp, in like manner, it fares much the same with their religion, which they esteem more for its character than quality; for as the impression adds nothing to the quality, neither does the character to true religion, as the quality depends not upon the image, neither does true religion upon the authority they ascribe to it. For as the quality is the same in value, without the impression, so is truth, or true religion, though it has not God's authority ascribed thereto by men, for its sanction. For as base or corrupt metal, having falsely

received the king's impressi^on, pass^es current, as value, with ignorant people, so doth corrupt doctrines, or opinions, when once they have falsely ascribed God's authority thereto, for their sanction. For as no metal has a right to pass current, under the king's impressi^on, except it be of a proper quality to receive it, neither has any doctrine or opinion a title to be received as divine, though it may have God's authority ascribed thereto, for its sanction, without it be of such a quality as to agree with the essence of his nature; as precious metals are entitled to receive the king's impressi^on, so hath all such doctrines whatever, that exactly agree with the nature of God, a right to be received as divine, whether they be said by men to have come from him or not. Some indeed may infer from this, that if we are to receive no doctrines or opinions as divine, when they have received the sanction of God's authority; this would be no less than Deism. If the refusing of doctrines, as divine, that will not correspond with the nature of God, but are diametrically opposite thereto, and yet falsely ascribe the sanction of his authority for its authenticity, in order that it may be received as divine; if this be Deism, I cannot refuse my part or share thereof.

If one be culpable, for detecting a piece of corrupt coin, under the impressi^on of the king's stamp, so must I, for refusing whatever may

falsely have been ascribed to God, contrary to his nature, under the sanction of his authority. Further, if a person should receive a quantity of goods, either for himself, or the behoof of another, and if he should accept of these goods, upon the estimate of the deliverer, without being tried, either by scale or measure, and if they, (viz. these goods,) should fall short one half, or three fourths of the said estimate, does not the receiver thereby wrong himself? and if he acts for the behoof of another, he must certainly make good the estimate at which he received them. So, in like manner, if we should receive as infallible, (whatever may be said to have come from God, because men have ascribed the sanction of his authority thereto, in order that it may be sustained as divine,) without proving the same, by his unalterable nature, if it does not agree therewith, may very justly make us accountable, and be required of us, for our impiously holding in his name, whatever may redound to his dishonour. But the particular glory of our religion is, that it be perfectly calculated agreeable to the nature of the Deity. For however much may be imposed thereinto, under his authority, that tends to the opposite, and will not agree therewith, is just all that more to the dishonour of the author to whom it is ascribed. This I declare, before God, to be an infallible truth, whether men receive it or not.

POSTSCRIPT. The ignorant and superstitious devotee doth not only most vainly suppose, but will confidently affirm, that we have no right to call in question whatever is said to have come from God. To illustrate this, if an enthusiastic priest, by ascribing the divine favour only to himself, and those of his own party, he thereby imagines that none hath a right to life, from the divine Spirit, but they themselves. Thus, by his dwelling under the impression of such a gross delusion, he at last dreams that God requires the utter extirpation and destruction of all such as are not of the same sentiments with himself. And from this, when awake, he riseth up, and declares to his associates, that he had an express command delivered him, in a revelation from God, to put to death such and such persons as differed from the said sentiments, and would not comply therewith; and upon this they proceed.

There is one thing yet remains, which is necessary to be observed, that what we have for revelation, was almost altogether delivered by dreams; and this is no mere groundless fancy; for it is what every person of judgment is fully satisfied and assured of. And it is further to be observed, that there are three different sorts of dreams wherewith a person may be visited when asleep; the first by a divine spirit, commissioned by God, to inform the person concerning things to come, whether to the advantage or disadvantage of it-

self, or of the person or people to which they were directed; the second by an evil spirit, like that of the false prophets, who were permitted to deceive the people. The third arose from the multiplicity of business, either of the past day, or of that which they had a near prospect of. Hence, whenever it pleased God to visit a person with a dream, whereby he saw the certainty thereof made out unto him, the person, by too often indulging the same, thereby imagined, that every dream or vision of this kind was an immediate revelation given him from God, (yea, though diametrically opposite to what he has commanded, such as the offering of human sacrifices, and the like,) without so much as calling it into question, in order that he might know whether it agreed therewith, and came from him or not. If a person shall dream, that he saw another in distress, and by the person applying unto him, he immediately relieves him; and the very next day the similar circumstance comes to pass, which being answerable to what he had dreamt the preceding night, the distressed person comes to require his assistance, he having it in his power, answers his demand, by which the distressed is thereby eased, or set at liberty; but if he should, upon a following night, dream that God did not only deliver up, but also required of him to put to death such persons as differed from him in sentiment, with both infant and suckling; is he

to believe that ever such a thing could come from God? No. But yet, according to the greater degree of enthusiasm the person labours under, so will the first dream give sanction to put in execution the second. But there is an infallible guide, whereby men may perfectly know what is the will of God, as there is nothing immoral can either possibly be required or proceed from him; but when once men, from a degree of weakness, can admit of themselves to be so imposed upon, or to believe that God either did or will require the performance of such immoral actions, this would put an end to the very best notions we can possibly form of him. But they will no sooner ascribe thereto the sanction of that which is divine, than the priest, in order to deceive the credulous, will require the impious belief thereof, to the dishonouring God; and to call it in question, is, by them, to incur his displeasure, to the inevitable damnation of such as do not receive it. But if this shall be sustained as just, we may then bid adieu to all right government, and every thing that is good. From this it is evident, that we have not only a right to challenge, but it is our indispensable duty to call in question every thing that is inconsistent with his nature; and also every false abomination, wherein they have most impiously ascribed the sanction of God's authority thereto for its authenticity. And, for proof thereof, lest that we should

come to be deceived, God expressly requires of us to try every spirit, that we may know, assuredly, whether they are from him or not. And there is no other infallible test, whereby we can possibly try them, but only by that of his own nature; and this we are assured of, that if they will not agree therewith, it is morally certain they cannot possibly come from him: for, as God is an infinitely wise and perfect being, he requires nothing but what is inseparable from the perfection of his nature; for it is most certain, that with him there is neither variableness, nor shadow of turning.

Hence it is evident, that whatever articles have been foisted into the Christian religion, contrary to the nature of God, to which they have most impiously ascribed the sanction of his authority, in order that they may be received as divine; the votaries thereof are infinitely more indulged thereto, than to that which is not only of a piece with himself, but inseparable from the nature of his existence. Again, one will be astonished at the credulity of ancient times, by what means they could possibly form or admit of such inconsistent notions of the true God, as to believe that he would require that which is diametrically opposite to the nature of his being. But this was altogether owing to the cunning and artifice of their leaders, who made merchandise of the people. And from this we need not be surpris'd, at

their priests taking the advantage, in deceiving the laity, in the early and ignorant ages of the world, when we see such numbers of mankind, as at this present day, delivering up their rational powers to their priests, for no fault, to be thrown not only into jail, but, as it were, hung in chains, like state-criminals, to satisfy their ambition. For when once a superstitious priest has prevailed so far upon the ignorance of the people, as to dispossess them of their rational powers, if he shall hold forth, that God requires them to worship the devil, by ascribing the sanction of God's authority thereto, they will be ready to comply with his command. And however culpable such may be thought, as delivered up their children to Moloch's priests, in order that they might commit them over to be inclosed within the burning idol, the other is infinitely more guilty, for giving up the rational powers, to be employed in dishonour of him from whom they received them; and though these ignorant parents gave up their children to be burnt in sacrifice to Moloch, this could, by no means, prove hurtful to their souls; but if we give up, and admit of these powers we received from God, to be sacrificed to his dishonour, will not the effect thereof prove the destruction of both soul and body at last?

I shall therefore conclude with the following observations; whether men believe it or not, it

may justly be said, with respect to religion, that, for the space of three thousand years, and upwards, the world of mankind in general have been sold under priestcraft; which is too evident from both sacred and profane history. And if they had not artfully ascribed a better authority than their own, for the sanction of what they required, and held forth, in deluding the people, such things could never possibly have taken place, or been received as divine; and it is only by virtue of that powerful engine, viz. priestcraft, that the Christian world hath been so wofully not only perverted, but also divided, and torn asunder, into so many different pieces, as it now is, which is no less than to despise, and bring dishonour upon him, who is not only the infallible Author, but also died in confirmation of what he taught for the good of men. Now, therefore, let every person be aware against all such doctrines as will not correspond with the nature and rectitude of the true God, to which the aforesaid gentlemen, (who thirst after in bringing under slavery the souls of men,) have falsely ascribed the sanction of his authority, in order that they may unsuspectedly be received as divine.

For though men may passively admit of their religion being measured out by their priest, independent of God, I never will receive, but only that which agrees, and is altogether of a piece with himself.—Mark what follows. How many

thousand volumes have been wrote under a sanction of piety, out of a pretence to enlighten the world of mankind. But, alas! instead of these volumes being the mean of enlightening men, there is too many of these volumes have had the quite contrary effect, such as only to increase and lead them back to grosser darkness: for the more ignorant people are, the more liable to fall in with the grosser mistakes in religion, and thereby deceived, and led aside, especially when attended with an uncommon shew of devotion, which is generally the case. But as God is the most rational of all other beings, he does not require, nor will accept, of any other kind of service than only that which is of a rational nature.

A N
E S S A Y
UPON WHAT IS COMMONLY CALLED
O R I G I N A L S I N ;

Where it is brought to, and tried by that infallible and divine test, viz. the nature and perfections of the true God, such as his holiness, his justice, his goodness, and truth.

C H A P. I.

CONTENTS. *An immediate deliverance to the enslaved, and liberty to the captives; or a release to all such as are ensnared by the doctrines, traditions, and commandments of fallible, superstitious, and bigotted men.*

P A R T I.

I N T R O D U C T I O N.

SOME, indeed, may come, in some measure, to be surpris'd, when they read over this essay that I have dwelt so long upon the refuting of this superstitious tenet; but the case is clear, when properly considered, that as this fortress hath been of so long standing, it requires the utmost industry to dislodge them, to wit, its diffe-

rent warriors, of their various dens, or caverns, which hath required the assiduous labour of all its different heroes, for the space of fourteen centuries past, or upwards; and without they be attacked, and stormed by superior force, they will neither abandon, nor give up with this their capital strength, or refuge of lies. And therefore, as all is now in readiness, I shall next prepare to begin the siege; but there is one thing must be carefully attended to, that the camp be set down right over against the sally-port, to protect all such as may attempt to come over, least they shall come to be killed, or wounded by some of the different engines of the enemy.

Hence, whatever number of pages I have used, in refuting of this text, they are nothing, when compared with the many (serpentine paths, wherein they lye in wait to deceive and ensnare the unwary traveller) volumes of sophistry, abstruse and long-winded discourses, that hath been wrote in its defence; for it requires a great many words, and sophistical arguments, to reason, or steal a person out of his judgment, (in order that he may believe, and receive a falsehood, in place of a truth;) when a few simple speeches will easily make him understand, convince his judgment, and serve for proof, in his believing a fact, a few syllables will serve to convey a truth, when many sentences are required to persuade people into error; and a few words

will serve, in broad day-light, to make one believe, that the sun is in the meridian at twelve o'clock; but it will require a great many sophistical arguments, to persuade, and make one believe, that the sun is directly below the horizon at twelve o'clock at night.

SECTION I.

CONTENTS of SECT. I. and II.

A simple delineation of the nature and state of man, as is consistent with him in his first formation, according to the degree he was made in, and designed for him by God.

IT may be said, in a sense, that we know nothing at all, in comparison, and are almost altogether ignorant of the different degrees of existence, as they arise, in gradation, in the scale of beings, which God hath made, even from the very lowest insect, that occupies its part in this great and vast universe, to the highest ranks of his creatures, that exist before him, (I mean the just and ever blessed God.) That there is amongst all the different tribes of animals, such as are the natural inhabitants, that exist in these different kinds of elements, to wit, earth, water and air, such creatures as partaketh of both natures; for instance, see what numbers of amphibious ani-

mals there are in the great ocean, some of which consists of fish, fowl, and flesh. Again, some thereof are partly fish, and partly beasts; some are partly fish, and partly fowl; the nature of each being adapted to live in either element, to wit, water, or in open air. And likewise, see amongst such, as land-animals, some of whom partake both of beast and fowl, who are partly beast, and partly fowl, both in form and nature; upon which account we may very reasonably suppose, that, amongst all the different creatures that are made, there are still some partaking with one another, both in form and disposition. Brutes are creatures who consist of both body and soul, to wit, of a corporeal substance and spirit; and this is what constitutes an animal body, endued with animal life. Angels, again, are a quite different kind of beings, distinct from animals; or, for any thing we know, are altogether independent of matter. Now, since angels and brutes are beings, the one made so distinct from the other, therefore, it was by no means inconsistent with the wisdom of the great Creator to make such a compound being, or creature as man, partaking of both natures, partly angelical, and partly animal. For that which constitutes a brute creature, is body and soul; but that which constitutes a rational creature, is body, soul, and spirit. This is what was the opinion of the most wise and learned of the heathen philosophers; and

not only of them alone, but also of the apostle Paul, who was of the same sentiment. So that when we come to speak of body, soul, and spirit, we mean a rational being; but when we speak of body and soul, we mean only a living animal, possessed of life. Hence, that which constitutes a rational being, or what we call man, hath a rational nature, added to the animal spirit. For the brute was only made a living soul, but man was made and endued with a rational soul, or spirit, additional to that of brutes. This is what was entirely the case with man in his first formation; for when he came forth from his Maker he was endued with the full powers of reason, together with the ripeness of all his rational faculties, and with as much strength of judgment, as the little circle, or small experience of knowledge he had got, would admit of.

For in all this man was in no ways singular; for the whole creation of God, whether of animal or vegetable life, were all produced after the very same manner, even in the very prime, in a full ripeness and perfection of life. But the second, or procreation of all things, was quite otherwise; for each thereof, proceeding from another, is produced by that which was before it. As concerning vegetables, we see, that when the seeds of the different species thereof fall, or are thrown into the earth, it is evident, when it comes to make its first appearance, it hath not the least re-

semblance of the parent, by whom it was produced; for instance, see the various species of corn, wheat, and barley, when they come to spring forth, and send out their respective blades from the earth, there is little or no distinction of one from another, every one of the same having a near resemblance of grass, until once they begin to shoot, and send forth the stems with their different ears, by which each species is easily distinguished one from another; first we have the blade, next the stalk, and last of all the ear, proceeding therefrom, till ripening to perfection. Thus, after the very same manner, we see, that all kinds of different shrubs, or trees, when their fruits or seeds fall, or are laid or thrown into the earth, and begin to spring and send forth their plant leaves, there is little or no difference in their first appearance one from another, especially among those that bear or bring forth fruit; but always excepting those barren shrubs, or trees, which produce only seeds, wanting either husks, stones, or shells, whose plant leaves generally differeth in their first appearance, from all those that bear fruit.

But when any of these different species of shrubs, or trees, shoot forth their second leaves, which are next to the plant leaves, then, and no sooner, do they properly distinguish themselves one from another.

Every different species of trees, or shrubs, re-

sembling in their second leaves, the very trees, or nature of these trees or shrubs, by whom they are produced, are to be discerned differently by their respective leaves. Hence, we see, from experience, that all these different kinds of trees and shrubs must be nursed up, stand, and remain fundry years in the ground, some kinds longer, and others shorter, before they can bear seed, produce, and bring forth fruit. Again, in like manner, we see, in the procreation of animals, how weak, indigent, and defenceless they are for themselves, and incapable to act, in quest of the different means of life, a great many of whom, are liable to be crushed, or devoured up, so soon as they come to make their appearance in the world; and all that a great many of them are capable of is only to make signs, as by noise, under their present necessities; and it is commonly long, with fundries of them, before they arrive at that degree of sense and action, that God, in his divine wisdom and knowledge, hath appointed and decreed for them, in that sphere of life they act in, among the scale of their different beings, in this our world. And likewise, how each of them comes to differ from another, which evidently declares, that they are made, directed, and governed, by no less wisdom and power than that of God himself.

S E C T. II.

THUS far is almighty power displayed respecting animals, but more so especially to man, above all others, whom God hath, as it were, appointed lord over the rest of his creatures, in this our world, which we at present possess, and are the inhabitants of. He, to wit, man, comes forth as a tender plant, scarce capable to partake in the knowledge of his own existence. Hence, of all the animal tribes, there is none less helpless than man; when he comes to enter the stage of this present life, he is little or nothing more, in appearance, but like the shrubs and vegetables aforesaid; to distinguish him from the rest of the different animals, than the bare mode or form of his body; and although the seeds of the rational powers be still lying latent, they remain, as it were, in an embryo for a long space of time, with little or no appearance above the rest of the different species that partake of animal nature. The seeds of these rational powers, lying dormant, only form and ripen along with the seeds of the animal body, and come as it were, in a manner, just to blossom and bud forth together the one with the other. Much after the same manner, as has been observed, with regard to trees, shrubs, and other vegetables, in the above, such as corn, wheat, and barley, under their different plant leaves, and various blades;

so man, in his infant state, and childhood, when he begins to speak, is like the trees and shrubs, when they send forth their second leaves, which proves of what species of trees, or shrubs, they are of. By this we see, that man, at first, is only, as it were, possessed of animal life; and as he grows up, and ripens more and more, he also receives, and learns by degrees, the things of animal nature; and as the animal powers still increase, so doth the desires of their animal nature increase also; and as there is little or no rational powers to contend with it, (to wit, the animal nature,) catcheth hold of every example, as fire or flame doth of tinder. Which before ever the rational powers bud or break forth, the animal powers are increased in strength, by custom and habit. For when once the rational powers begin to bud and break forth, as a tender plant, they are even, as it were, choked and stifled, as with so many briers and thorns around them, by virtue of the animal nature, which is almost become ripe, and too strong to strive or contend with. And as these powers begin to peep forth, in the midst of all this bramble, they are often times almost altogether like to be choked or smothered thereby. And as the rational powers, like as a young and tender plant, begin to increase, the animal powers or nature thereof still increase also, whereby they keep the ascendancy. And as the shrub, or tree, standeth fundry years

in the earth, with their seeds lying latent or concealed in the stock thereof, before that ever they so much as blossom, or send forth any fruit; in like manner is man, through both his infant state, and childhood, before ever his rational powers begin to form, bud forth, blossom and ripen; and as a grain of corn, when it falls into the earth, first sends forth a small and tender sprig of life, next the blade, afterwards the stalk, and when it hath advanced, more and more, at last of all, the stem comes forth, with its goodly acre, and as it shoots up and ripens, all its different blades do fade and wither apace; also, in like manner, doth man. When he first comes to make his entry and appearance into this our world, he is the most indigent and helpless of all other animals, in a state of infancy, who arises gradually, through childhood, until he comes to youth, and next arrives at manhood. In the infant state, the rational powers are nothing more than in their conception; in childhood, they are, as it were, formed in the womb; in youth, as ripening towards the birth; and at last, they begin to make their approach, and break forth from the womb of youth, in the beginning of manhood, by making their appearance, like the approach of a new-born infant, into this our world. And thus it shoots forth, as like the stem of corn, with its ear, where it begins to increase in strength, and ripens more and more, until it comes to ar-

rive at maturity. And as the different blades of the stalk begin to fade and wither, as the ear of corn begins to ripen, so, in like manner, the rational powers begin, and advance progressively, as it were, from a state of infancy, through its childhood, and youth, and still continues in a state of youth, until once the animal powers and nature, like the blade on the stalk of corn, begin to fade and wither; and as the animal powers do fade and wither, the rational powers do increase and ripen in strength or vigour. And as the rational powers were only rising through all these different degrees, from a state of minority, and being, as it were, partly in a state of subjection to the animal powers, which had kept the mastery and ascendancy over the rational, whereby it was incapable to withstand, or gain the victory over it. From what has been illustrated, in the above, it is obvious, that man hath learned, in this indigent state, from evil example, by reducing the same into practice, every one having, by custom and habit, corrupted their own ways, in a more or less degree, according as their opportunities would admit of.

To conclude this section: From what has been observed in the above, it is evident, that as the rational powers begin to form, and draw toward strength, so do they also begin to oppose the animal by slight skirmishes. And as they increase more and more in power, so do they also resist

the animal. And as the rational powers come to acquire and gather strength, so do they renew their skirmishes more smartly, till at last they inclose in warm and sharp engagements, so as, by their persevering therein, they become conquerors at last. But, on the other hand, when the rational powers do not oppose, in waging war against, by skirmishing off the different attacks made by the animal, they, at last, fall a prey thereto. And if they shall resist, and not persevere therein, they are foiled, and conquered thereby, and fall victims thereto at last. I shall here take the liberty to digress for a little, upon account of the near relation that stands betwixt natural and revealed religion.

Some have not only alledged, but have also maintained, that natural religion was sufficient of itself to show and teach mankind their duty, independent of revelation. But to this I do not agree; my reasons being as follow. This, so far, I acknowledge, that the religion of nature might have been sufficient to teach and instruct us our duty, if we had been sent, or come into this world, in an adult state, not only endued with, but also possessed of the full strength of all the rational powers, capable to resist every temptation to sin, by being aware of evil example. But the case is altogether otherwise, by reason of our entering upon this stage, little or nothing above mere animals; as being at first, in a man-

ner, quite insensible, and, for a good many years, incapable to discern betwixt either good or evil. And while under this state, or condition, the animal powers increase more and more, till once they arrive at full maturity, the rational powers having all this time been little more than formed; and, after making their appearance, being, as it were, in an infant-state, behoved to be subservient to the animal; by which means, the rational was obliged to take its laws from the animal, and not the animal from the rational, as in an adult state; and by this became liable and subjected to temptation, and evil example, being partly confirmed therein, from custom and habit, before ever they became rationals. This being the case, vice becomes natural to us, before ever we are aware thereof; and by being accustomed thereto, the religion of nature becomes almost altogether forgot; and, for the said reason, God was pleased, in his goodness, to visit us with the revelation of his will, that, by our complying therewith, we might not be left to perish for ever. From what has been observed in the above, it is sufficiently evident how much need we stood in of a revealed religion, or a revelation from God, in order to restore and put us in possession of what we had lost, while in an animal state, to wit, such a revelation as may be understood to consist in the making a right improvement, and proper use, of these rational

powers, which we at first received, and were bestowed upon us by God, when he gave us beings in the world.

S E C T. III.

By what means Adam became a bad example to his posterity.

THIS hath actually been the case, although I know it hath been asserted, that all manner of iniquity arose from the consequence of Adam's first transgression, and that he was the original parent thereof; upon which account, it is said that all mankind have been corrupted ever since, and are become altogether incapable to resist sin.

But there is one thing I would desire to ask, which is this, Is there so much as one of Adam's posterity that is less capable to resist sin, than Adam himself, when in a state of innocency? There are thousands of his posterity have resisted sins, to what number we know not; but the very first temptation that ever we heard of, that Adam had offered to him, he made no resistance, but immediately embraced, and plunged himself over head and ears at once, although he had received no manner of corruption, as it hath been said and asserted of his posterity, and though not yet born, to have been guilty, and punishable for Adam's first transgression. Upon which account, thousands of different volumes of sophistry have

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been wrote, to evade the truth of this fact, that Adam's descendents sinned not, as heirs to his sin, but only from the infection of a bad example. It is true, indeed, as the apostle Paul taketh notice of, in one of his figures, that Adam was the first precedent, by giving a bad example of sin to his posterity, whereby a great many of his offspring were infected by the contagion of that bad example, and became a stumbling block to them for the future.

S E C T. IV.

In what manner we receive the infection of sin.

AGAIN, we know assuredly, that the time of childhood and youth is the most proper, above all others, for the receiving impressions into the mind; for instance, we see that Solomon, in giving his advice, saith, "Train up a child, when he is young, in the way that he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it." We know, that the impressions we receive in childhood and youth always take deepest root, and remain longest upon the mind. And, in this period of life, the rational powers are but, as it were, in the womb, while the animal powers are upon the increase, and waxing towards maturity; at this time of life, it receives and catches hold of every object that is agreeable to animal nature, or the flesh, because there are no

rational powers to withstand them. And it is at this time of life, and after, that the rational powers are most in subjection to the animal, that the evil example is more readily received, and easiest reduced to practice, custom, or habit, from the different temptations to which it is exposed.

To conclude this section; it is objected by such as are sticklers for this heresy, that our being accustomed to evil, through the repetition of vice, before we become rationals, is a proof of our depravity by nature, from Adam. But, in answer to this objection, of man's being accustomed to evil, through the repetition of vice, before he becomes a rational agent, is a proof of original sin: is other animals, in their making a prey, and devouring one another, a sin, with whatever actions may be hurtful to man, either in person, or supply of life? No. Neither can man, (who being only a sagacious animal,) before he arrives at reason, be guilty of sin; for though their actions, like other animals, be repeated, the cause thereof can by no means be ascribed to Adam's transgression, but only to the animal passions with which the rational souls of both Adam and his posterity were subjected to dwell, while they continued the inhabitants of an animal body; which, through their near connection therewith, were made liable of being corrupted, in a more or less degree, from the different temptations to which they were thereby exposed. Be-

sides all this, if actual transgressions were the effect of Adam's first sin, as vainly asserted by these originalists, and not the consequence of the above causes, every particular person behoved to be equally corrupted, and abound in vice alike, and not in a more or less degree, as nature itself infallibly proves it to be the case.

S E C T V.

An evidence of man's being made subject to sin.

AGAIN, to prove the irresistible power of custom or habit being received in childhood and youth: for instance, we see that it is in the power of man to subject almost any kind of trees and shrubs, of whatever sort, when young, to turn, and make them grow into whatever form they will, or figure they please, although, that in them there is no consistency with animal life; we see, that, by the power of sprigs and loops, a small tree can be made, in a few years, to cover the surface of a large and high wall, and though removed therefrom, yet, for sometime afterwards, it will still retain the same figure that it was formed into on the flat surface.

Again, we see, that all such trees and shrubs that grow nigh to the sea-coast, and are continually exposed to the storms that bloweth therefrom towards the land, and are not only all, but at all times, bended by the pressure, weight, and

tempest of air that still blows and bears towards the inland country. Thus, in like manner, doth it fare with man, when nourished and brought up under an example, tending more to evil than good, which groweth up with his years from infancy and childhood, till at last it becomes as a production of nature, tho' yet, after all, from nothing else but mere custom or habit of life. Thus, man is too often nourished and brought under subjection to evil. But, on the other hand, that which is good arises from the choice made by these rational powers, given them of God, in their first formation, which is no less than a ray from the Deity itself, and is what distinguisheth man from all the rest of the animal tribes

S E C T. VI.

Continuation of the evidence, and also proved to be impossible.

AGAIN, we see, that the right hand, by reason of being more accustomed to exercise and labour than the left, is because its nerves, from custom and close application, becometh stronger than the other. For without a greater degree of exercise and labour, there could be no difference of the one from the other.

And as all this strength arises only from application, and exercise, and labour, it is even clear to a demonstration, that the difference thereof

ariseth not from nature itself, but is only acquired by the practice of exercise, that it daily meets with, in the course of life. From this it is manifest, what the power of example is, when once received and reduced to practice; for thus when accomplished it thereby comes habitual at last. For proof thereof, we have the same confirmed, by the prophet Jeremiah, saying, can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots, then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to evil. Thus, it is evident that example, when once rivetted upon the mind, and strengthened by habit, becomes thereby next to irresistible.

For instance, see the small seeds of some species of large trees, when they fall, or are thrown into the earth, and take root, can, with the greatest ease, be pulled up by one's hand, while they remain a small and tender plant; but when once they have stood some centuries in the earth, they will require, not only the strength, but the assiduous labour of different days, to dig up, and remove one of them from its place. In like manner, the beginning of sin may be very easily stifled at first; but when once, through a long and usual practice, it becomes entirely habitual, and almost altogether natural and irresistible at last; by which means it is next to impossible to root it out; and if it shall be overcome, it will require the assiduous task of different years to dispossess and expel it from its seat.

Hence it is plain, from what hath been delineated in the above, that the great cause of all that moral evil, that abounds in the world, ariseth not from the effect of what they call original sin, proceeding from ordinary generation, but only from that constitution (being subject to vanity) in which Adam was created for a probationary state, though not proof against, but liable to fall. Now was it possible, (as hath not only been reported, but even required by too many of Adam's posterity) that they can be more perfect than him, not only, by being proof against, but altogether unliable to fall. They will admit Adam to fall from his probationary state, but will, by no means, allow of themselves being liable to fall from theirs, but only upon the account of Adam's transgression. And as the original of sin only proceeded from Adam, independent of his Creator, it neither did, nor could be conveyed, by natural generation, to his posterity, for that was impossible; because sin and guilt, as a moral evil, is not a creature of God, and if not a creature, it is simply impossible that it can be procreated; it being just as possible for the creature to produce a world from nothing, independent of the Creator, as it is possible to procreate, and convey by generation, so much as one additional quality, than what was originally given thereto by God.

But as his posterity behaved to be probatio-

ners, and as liable to fall as himself, the infection arose from the contagion of sin, and was conveyed to, and received by them, through temptation and evil example, that was in the world around them, and being practised, it thereby was reduced into custom, through which it became habitual amongst men.

To conclude this section; we see from the above, that there is nothing can possibly be more evident, than what has been already observed, that it is only by our persevering, whether in good or evil, whereby we become proficient in either virtue or vice.

S E C T. VII.

Some further evidences, viz. a parent and son respecting his grand children, a parent and tutor for his children, and a king or a goveror over his subjects.

AGAIN, if a parent should allot one thousand sterling a year, and consign the same into the hands of his son, (for the behoof of his grandson, though being the successor of his said son,) when he was absolutely certain, before the consignment thereof, that his own son was to become a bankrupt, in consequence of his insufficiency for the execution of the trust reposed in him, either for himself, successor, or any whatever, upon account of his extravagant conduct; and although

his grandson had received no part of the money from his father, yet notwithstanding thereof, the grand-father, most unjustly, iniquitously, and cruelly, putting him to death, upon no other account, than of his own son's demerit. Or if a parent should think it proper to lodge ten thousand Sterling in the hands of a person, as tutor; or manager, over his children, while they were in a state of pupilarity and minority, and although morally certain that he was to become bankrupt the very next day, which absolutely happened; yet after all, notwithstanding his own children had received no part of the foresaid sum, neither in pupilarity, minority, or afterwards, yet, as a bloody, villainous, iniquitous ruffian, for to put them all to death. Now, what judgment could any rational being form of any such parents, as these before recited, or in what light could they appear before the bar of justice.

However shocking the foregoing examples may appear, they are nothing, when compared with that light in which the chief patrons, of what they call original sin, have represented and set forth the just and true God. Now, which of these two, mentioned in the aforesaid, or a third parent, that hath nothing to give to his children, no not so much as one farthing, who put them to death also, for fear that they should become burdensome to others; which of all these three was most culpable, to wit, he that had nothing

to give his children, or the other two, who threw away the fortunes destined for their offspring, by giving them to bankrupts, and also putting the innocent children to death?

In answer thereto, I say the former two were more culpable than the latter; for the former two parents put the children to death most unjustly, and for no fault in them, but only for their own personal crimes as parents; but the latter parent, not for any fault, neither in himself or children, that they were capable to prevent, but only for fear that they should become burdensome to others. In all this, he is by no means justifiable, because he transgressed one part of the law, on purpose to avoid the breach of another, though mistaken; but the former two parents put their children to death upon account of their own mismanagement; and thus they falsely imputed their guilt, as a crime, to their innocent offspring. But if the former children had received the respective sums themselves, and either by squandering away, or wasting them, having nothing to return, when required, were put to death, in way of punishment, for their fault, the sentence might have been more justifiable. But as the parents were the occasion, and the very identical cause of the loss, therefore to punish the children for a fault that they were never guilty of, nor was ever in their power either to foresee or prevent, the putting them to death, in way of pu-

nishment, when entirely innocent, was no less than murder, and that of the very deepest die. For if he that made man, and made him upright, and with strength to resist sin, had given him a law, the penalty thereof being death, and if he had transgressed that law, he might have put him to death, in way of punishment, for the breach thereof; in this the sentence would certainly have been just. Or, although he should have made man, and made him upright, and although man had been guilty of no transgression, he that made him might, very justly, have put him to death, without any injustice done to man, for he suffered no loss, as death came not to him in way of punishment, but only by appointment of the Creator, and was only the loss of that life which God had lent him; he being only the property of him, who gave him a being. But if he that made man should have put him to death, in way of punishment, for a fault that he was by no means guilty of, and never so much as had it in his power, either to foresee or prevent; this indeed would not only have been a piece of the highest injustice, but an act altogether inconsistent with God, though not with men of perverse minds.

Again, it may indeed be acknowledged, that God's removing of life from any of his creatures, whether rational or irrational, is by no means any kind of punishment unto them; and whatever

afflictions a rational creature may suffer, when in life, they are no more than what is incident to animal nature. Hence it must be acknowledged, that different persons, or people, have borne affliction, in way of punishment, which they brought upon themselves, through their own folly. For instance, if his present Majesty should be so good as to favour one of his subjects with one thousand per annum, for any term of years, longer or shorter, as his Majesty thought proper, so that when the appointed time came, he took that which was his own from him, and gave it to another. In all this it cannot, by any means, be said, that he was injured, when he only took from him that which was his own, and gave it to another. Neither can it be said, that God hath wronged or injured any of his creatures, in removing them from life.

Again, for to say that God would make a creature, and punish it, for that which was neither its actual nor personal guilt, it would even be a piece of the grossest absurdity, and the highest aspersion that could possibly be thrown out against him, because it was no less than impeaching him with the very highest degree of injustice.

But some will object, and say, as we are all his creatures, he may use us in whatever way he pleaseth. But in answer to this, what is a king or a governor over his subjects, when once he is stripped of justice? Is he any thing more than a

mere tyrant? Or what consistency and connection hath creating power with a just God, when once they have stripped him of his justice and goodness, which are inseparable from his moral attributes? Now, these are the persons, who, for the sake of their own favourite pre-conceived opinions, would even represent the true God in a worse light than any of the idol-gods of the Heathen nations were held by their different votaries; for these Pagans only believed that their offended deities delighted in the blood and death of their innocent children; but they more (to wit, such as the pretended worshippers of the true God,) believe that a just God will not only put to death an innocent person, for the guilt of another, but require not only the death of the body, but the eternal punishment of the soul also. Thus far they have exceeded the most gross and barbarous conceptions of the Heathen nations.

S E C T. VIII.

*The impropriety of a parent contracting with
government for his children.*

AGAIN, where is that government that could give sanction to such a law, as that the parent might agree, under certain terms and conditions with the said government, both for himself, children, and posterity, and that, upon the breach of the conditions of that law agreed upon by the pa-

rent, both him and his children were to be put to death, when the children were not only entirely free, but altogether innocent? The parent, indeed, may very justly be brought under condign punishment for his own fault; but the children never can. But if the children themselves shall transgress that law and agreement, after arriving at the years of discretion, if the tenor thereof be according to the divine laws, they may very justly be made to suffer punishment for the breach thereof.

A parent, indeed, may be so ignorant, without authority from God, as to agree that if he himself should transgress that contract, both he and his children shall suffer condign punishment, or be put to death.

Man, indeed, may give sanction to such a law, but God never will. The children may, indeed, very justly suffer in their effects, or temporal estate, that descends to them by their parents, for their parents fault; but as for condign punishment, that can never be, because it would be unjust. But if they should suffer death, it would be murder, and a heinous transgression of the law of God.

S E C T. IX.

An advancement made by some, wherein God is represented as punishing the children for the parents transgression.

AGAIN, as already taken notice of in the former section, I know it hath been advanced, by some Christian writers, who are the chief patrons of what they call original sin, that God hath made the children suffer condign punishment, by putting them to death, as a punishment for their parents transgression; such as the children of the old world; also Sodom, Gomorrah, and the like: but this is nothing more than the stupid advancement of Pagan ignorance; for God never put any of the children of mankind to death, in way of punishment, for their parents sin; for although the children of the old world, and such as Sodom, Gomorrah, and the like, I acknowledge, suffered death upon the account of their parents transgression, but these children never suffered, in way of punishment for their parents sin; for death was unto them, not only a benefit, but a very great and particular blessing. For if these children had lived, they would have become partakers of their fathers iniquities, (from evil example,) by joining with them in their sin. Upon which account, death would have come upon them, and they would have suffered, in way

of punishment, and not in the way of a blessing. It may indeed be argued thus, Might not God have cut off the parents, and permitted the children to remain in life, since they were not guilty of their fathers iniquities? In answer to this, children are such helpless creatures, that they could do nothing for themselves for the supply of life; and, therefore, could neither avoid nor escape death.

But is it not said, that he will visit the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate him? But do children hate God? No, certainly not: for our Saviour saith, suffer little children to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven. But the meaning of the above is neither more nor less than this, so long as the children, or young and rising generation, adhere to the sins or iniquities of the former, he would punish them, upon the account thereof, but no longer: and for to punish a just, or an innocent person, that is what he never will, because it would be unjust, and entirely inconsistent with the very rectitude of his nature, as he is God.

Before I conclude this section, it is necessary to take notice of another different assertion, used in favours of this heresy, which is as follows, where it is said, concerning Sodom, that if there were ten righteous to be found therein, he would not destroy it for ten's sake: and on this is laid

a very great stress, by these who are sticklers for what they call original sin; saying, that in such a city, as Sodom, there behoved to be more than ten children; therefore they conclude, from this, that children are sinners by nature; or, if not, God would have spared the city for their sake. But this is, in every degree, just as absurd as all the rest of their advancements; for who is so grossly ignorant, that does not know, that children are never included under numeration, but at twenty, and at other times at sixteen years of age, and not under. The reason being this, because under sixteen, mankind, though innocent, cannot justly be sustained capable of reason, and till once he become a rational, he cannot properly be said to judge betwixt good and evil. Besides all this, whether was life, or death, the greatest blessing to these children? Death for certain; because, when they died without sin, the enjoyment of God, though unknown to them, was inseparable therefrom; but if they had been spared in life, and bred up in the wickedness of Sodom, death would not have come to them as a blessing, but as a punishment for their iniquities. Therefore it is evident, from this, that what was a punishment to such as were come to years, was an estimable blessing to the children, who, by death, were prevented from partaking of the guilt and pollution of such a degree of wickedness; and also, if there had been ten righteous

adults in Sodom, this might have been a mean, under God, to have convinced that people of the evil of sin, with the punishment that was due thereto; and thereby brought about their repentance. But that is what children bred up under such a degree of wickedness, without seeing good, were incapable to effect.

Therefore it is evident, from the above, that the sparing of Sodom, for the sake of their innocent children, would only have been a lengthening out of their time, for the increase of their wickedness, in order to bring about the children's damnation. Further, I shall observe another fantastical subterfuge used in support of this tenet, where it is said, that Adam lived one hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image, and called his name Seth. Here they affirm, that this image consisted only of the nature of that original corruption, which is said to arise and descend to him from his father's first sin. But in order to set this in a just and proper light; is Seth to be supposed more wicked than Cain? (who is never said to resemble his Father's image,) Certainly not. For we have an account of Cain's wickedness, but no such thing of Seth. From this it is evident, that this likeness of Seth is only meant of the personal image, and nature of his father, without respect to any such imputation. For instead of Seth being begotten in the likeness

of sin, it is evident that it was after that image that Adam first received from God, as may be understood from the fifth chapter of Genesis, verse first, "In the day that God created man, "in the likeness of God made he him:" part of verse third, "And Adam lived an hundred and "thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image."

It being said, in the first verse, that God created man in his own likeness, it is most obvious, that what is expressed in the third verse, of Adam's begetting a son after his own likeness, is only in reference the one to the other, meaning, that the image which Adam had received from God, the same was also conveyed to Seth. But in order to satisfy the reader, concerning this image, that Adam's begetting a son after his own likeness, as observed by a celebrated author, means, that he was an imitator of his father's piety, and his children followed his holy example. Wherefore the scripture calls them the children of God, with contrary distinction to those of Cain, who are called the children of men. (*Le Clerk.*)

And besides all this, since Adam was created a fallible creature, is any person so grossly ignorant as to imagine it was possible for Adam, who was made fallible at first, by God, to have begot an infallible son. Thus I apprehend, from the foresaid, that this cobweb fortrefs is, in every degree, as insufficient as all the rest of their chime-

ras, in which they have taken sanctuary, and reposed their strength.

For these, like one perishing, who will even catch at a shadow upon the water, when nothing else can be found for their relief; so, in like manner, do these originalists take hold of shadows for lack of substance, in order to support their hypothesis.

S E C T. X.

That children may be put to death for their parents transgression, is no new doctrine, it being of a Pagan institution.

AGAIN, the advancing that parents have a right, and that children may lawfully be punished or put to death, for the parents transgression, is no new doctrine, but may be said to be of three or four thousand years standing; the original of which doctrine hath been, as it were, raked out of the very ashes of Paganism; each of whom, in these ancient times, most vainly imagining that those of their own children were just as much their property, to be disposed of in whatever way they pleased, as the different kinds or species of animals that were contained in their own herds and flocks; so that, when they had offended the gods, they then took one or more of their own children, and offered it or them up a burnt offering, in way of sacrifice, to appease these Heathen or Pagan deities, for their own offences, with

as much freedom, as it had been a lamb or kid from out of their own folds or flocks; and thus they transferred their own guilt over upon the heads of their innocent children, by falsely making them bear their sins, and punishing them for their own transgressions. And thus, they supposed, and took the gods to be just such as themselves, who would be pleased with no less than in shedding the blood of their innocent children. Hence, it appears evident, from what has been said, as hath been sufficiently shown from the above, that Paganism has never so much as yet been rooted up, nor expelled from this our world. But one thing I know, that no sooner than ever this their favourite theme, or Diana, comes to be attacked, or spoken against, but immediately the silver-smiths, her particular favourite votaries, with all their different attendants, immediately cry out, and make an uproar, and fall a screaming, like to as many wild animals, entangled fast in a net, saying, with Micah, They have taken away my gods; and what have I more?

S E C T. XI.

An assertion advanced by these originalists, of the human race being depraved through Adam's sin, and refuted.

AGAIN, it hath been asserted, by the chief patrons of this tenet, that the whole human

race is, and hath been depraved, in their natures, by reason of Adam's sin, independent of any actual transgression of their own. But this, like many other of their assertions, is neither more nor less than a mere bare assertion, without the authority of so much as one text of scripture in support thereof, from either the Old or New Testament; wherein it is many times said, and expressed, that we have both destroyed, undone, and corrupted our own selves; but never so much as once, that our natures were depraved and corrupted by Adam.

And since this is no scripture-doctrine, therefore it must certainly be nothing more than an invention of the devil, whereby all mankind, whatever sins they are guilty of, may lawfully apologize, and excuse themselves, saying, the fault is not ours, or theirs, because their natures were depraved and corrupted in Adam, whom they have the assurance to make the author or cause of their grossest sins. But those Christians that circumscribe themselves, and others, to systems of divinity, are just like that tyrant, who framed and made a bed, by way of a standard, for the length of his different subjects, that whatever they were more in length, he cut off, and whatever they were short of the standard, he stretched them to it. Thus, in like manner, do they use the scriptures, by their systems of divinity, (if they may be called so;) for whatever text,

or portion of scripture, that comes short of their systems, they put them to the rack, by which they stretch them to their standard; and when it speaketh more than what will properly suit their system, they either darken it, or turn it about some other way, that they may the better make it answer their purpose. But the Christian, or New Testament system, to me, is above all others; upon the foundation, or simplicity of which, Christianity was at first founded, established, and continued for some time, in its original purity; but, at last, fell into a parcel of wretched bad hands, upon the back of the third century, from whence it hath never as yet been rescued. But just like one, when complaining of ill-dressed victuals, he said, That the Almighty was pleased to send meat, but the devil sent cooks. Thus it hath fared too much with Christianity; and it is most lamentable that its case here hath been too similar to the above.

I shall now conclude this section with the following remark: For, as the builder artfully prepares his wood, and bends his planks, by the force of instruments, round the different timbers of his ship, in order that they may the more easily comply with the curve and mould of his vessel; similar thereto, methinks, I at present see the patrons for what they call original sin, as it were, straining every nerve, whereby they may the

more artfully bend (in favours of their Diana, though to the dishonour of God) whatever portion of scripture they falsely imagine appears in support of this arch-heresy, with different others, that may be said to arise or proceed therefrom. This they do, in order to re-establish its ancient authority, yea, though diametrically opposite, and inconsistent, with the very nature and perfections of the Deity.

S E C T. XII.

Another assertion urged in favours of this tenet, in respect to the depravity of animals, upon account of Adam's sin, and shown to be absurd.

AGAIN, it is said, and hath been asserted, by these originalists, who are the chief patrons of this tenet, that all the different tribes, that exist in the animal creation, whether on the land, in the air, or watery elements, viz. such as beasts, fowls, and fishes, that each, and all of them, lived in perfect agreement and harmony one with another, till once that Adam transgressed the law of his God, and ever after were at enmity, living at war, and become a terror and prey one to another; and all this, they say, arose from the effects of Adam's sin. But is it possible, that such inconsistent notions could ever so much as enter into the mind, or exist in the understanding, of any rational being, above that of an in-

fidel? No; it is not possible that any such absurd conceptions could ever so much as enter into the thoughts of any human existence above that of an infidel's. For instance, Is a lamb any terror to a fox? No, it is not. Is a sheep any terror to a wolf? No. Is a lark any terror to a hawk? No. Or is a chicken, a partridge, or an hen, a terror to any kind of ravenous beast, or bird of prey? No; they are not. Does not the very construction of the body of each thereof teach us otherwise? Are not all birds of prey made with talons, and hooked bills, in order to catch and devour their prey? Is not each voracious beast also possessed of talons, and large tusks, both for catching and devouring of their prey? All of them, from their very first formation, are made to live upon what they can catch of animal life, as a prey, for their food. Does not a great part of the brutal creation live upon animal food, viz. beasts, fowls, and fishes, who feed upon one another? We even see, that the very least of birds live upon small worms, and likewise upon all different kinds of insects; and although many kinds of both beasts and birds live upon roots, seeds, fruits, and other vegetables, they themselves are only a prey to support the wants of others at last, who live upon animal food. Hence it is clear, from the make of these different animals, that they were so constructed by God, in their first formation, to answer the

respective purposes they were intended for. But these originalists would have God to add virulent qualities, of which they were not formerly possessed before Adam's sin. This is nothing more but only to support their own wild ideas, in order to confirm their own vain hypothesis. To conclude this section; it is most obvious, that when once mankind lay aside their reason, it is hard to determine to what length they will arrive to at last.

S E C T. XIII.

Another assertion used in support of this doctrine, that if Adam had not sinned, man would not have died; and shewing the inconsistency of the same.

AGAIN, it hath been and is asserted, by the chief patrons of this tenet, that if Adam had not transgressed the law of his God, man would not have died, but would have lived for ever, and that without any manner of trouble or danger to molest him. But how far soever this assertion may appear to be true, and hold with others, to me it does not. For it appears evident, that a material being, who is possessed of animal life, is certainly liable to death, because it cannot possibly subsist without a material supply of life; for a life that depends upon a continual supply of perishing subsistence to support it, must certainly be liable, and subject, to death itself at last. Thus

it is evident, even to a demonstration, that there is no kind of animal life but what is capable of feeling; then, since animal life is capable of feeling, it is evident, without all manner of contradiction, that it is certainly liable and subject to pain; and if subject to pain, it may certainly be exposed to a thousand different accidents, whereby it may become liable to death. For if the least degree of pain give uneasiness, the greater must give more still, they both acting against life; and seeing they both, in a smaller and greater degree, act against life, what must be the event of an extreme degree of pain, but certain and inevitable death? Hence, since animal nature must need subsistence for the nourishment of life, so that without the supply thereof it must certainly cease to exist; thus, in like manner, if a person were, by chance, exposed under the fall of an impendent rock, or great tower, such as that of Siloam, mentioned by our Saviour, he should not only be deprived of life, but even of the very mode, or form of being itself. And though these originalists, without authority from God, should, by the inverting of nature, say, that he, viz. Adam, in that state, was not subject to pain, this, by no means, will suspend the laws of nature, (to wit, the action of gravity, which being an inherent quality, inseparable from matter,) from operating, in the full force of their own proper channel, as to prevent the impendent rock, or tower,

to have fallen thereupon. And though he should have been proof against death, he, without remedy, would inevitably have been detained thereby, under its irresistible pressure, as invincible for ever. It may indeed be argued, that man was, perhaps, possessed of a future knowledge, whereby he foresaw, and became proof against all manner of accidents. But if this had been the case, he would, certainly, never have transgressed the law of his God; from this foreknowledge, he would, assuredly, have known before hand, that God would certainly expel him from paradise. It hath likewise been advanced, for an invincible evidence of man's not dying, if he had not sinned, that a person, holy and free of sin, could never have suffered punishment, or come under death. But natural death, as it comes from God, by no means becomes a punishment; for we see all animal life, or what may rather, more properly, be styled the irrational creation, which are altogether incapable of sin, are made liable to death. Therefore, natural death can, by no means, be said to be executed upon creatures in way of punishment; for no corporeal punishment can be justly exacted upon a creature, except it be conscious of its fault; and this is what the brute creation is incapable of. We see, also, how our Saviour, who was perfectly holy, and free of all manner of sin, and being possessed of an animal body was under the

power of death. It is said, indeed, that he became obedient, and subject to death; but this means not a natural, but an unnatural death (to wit, the death of the cross) to which he submitted himself; to be sure, as he had an unlimited power, he could have escaped death, whether natural, or unnatural; but this was not the case; wherefore it behoved him, in all things, to be made like unto his brethren; and although sinless, liable to both pain and death, as being an invariable law, to which all animal life is exposed, and subject to, from their first formation, by the unalterable nature of their constitution, as being the possessors thereof. Hence it is evident, that if the foresaid doctrine of man's not dying were true, could such a thing as pain have reached the animal system; if it had not, the first law of nature, viz, the preservation of life, would either never have taken place; or, if it did, it inevitably behoved to be at an end; and if this had been the case, that famous passion of pity, or tender sympathy, for lack of an object, would therefore most certainly have been given thereto in vain. But sympathy declares, that man was created an object that stood in need thereof.

Lastly, to conclude this section, I would ask these originalists only this one simple question, Are there any kind of principles, passions, appetites, affections, or the like, wherewith God hath endued animal life, given thereto in vain? If it is

answered, No, which is just, the controversy is at an end; because, that if man, when created in a state of innocence, had been made proof against death, the preservation of life had certainly therefore been bestowed, by God, on him in vain. And though they should object, that this was only the consequence of Adam's first sin, this will never subject God to create new additional power to the first, for the sake of their immoral desires, in support of any such hypothesis, as would make him inconsistent with himself. For if man had been created without desire toward the preservation of life, he had, no doubt, been in a more miserable and worse condition than any of the animal tribes, as being altogether incapable of danger from the numberless accidents to which he is still exposed.

S E C T I O N X I V .

An affirmation that not only the rational, but other animals, were punished for Adam's sin; which affirmation, like the rest, is found false.

IN connection with the former, it is not only reported, but even asserted, by the chief patrons of this doctrine, that whatever pain or trouble, not only the rational, but even the brutal part of the creation, is subject to, and suffers, either when in life, or in death itself, is only upon account of Adam's transgression. Now, what is

this but to make God unjust, in punishing the innocent in place of the guilty; and not only the same species, but all other different species of beings, though altogether distinct from rationals. But there is one thing most certain, that when once men come to make God unjust, or speak inconsistent with the rectitude and nature of his moral perfections, there are no limits left for such to what length they will go against God: for both pain and suffering, as hath been already observed, is what all animal life, from the nature of their beings, are subject unto: for, if they were not liable to pain and suffering, they could, by no means, be careful against danger; and whatever weapons God hath provided them with, for their protection and defence, would have been altogether unnecessary; for which reason, how many different species of the animal creation would have been inevitably devoured up by the rest, therefore no vestiges of such species would have been left. Thus, I would think it morally certain, that no person, under the enjoyment and use of its rational powers, that hath been given thereto, and received from God, but what must know, that man, who inhabits an animal body, that that body he inhabits, and of which he is in possession of, must assuredly be subject to trouble, pain, death, and dissolution, along with other animal bodies, who are nothing more than a certain kind of vegetables, though

varied in their natures one from another; all of them, like other vegetables, proceed from one another, but are cut down, and wither away at last. I shall yet consider this subject a little further, before I take my leave of this section. It being likewise advanced by these originalists, as has already been observed in the foresaid, that the very brutal creation come to suffer upon the account of Adam's transgression. This assertion can never hold, except they can prove, against the above, that animal life was incapable of pain or suffering before that Adam transgressed the law of his God. But this is not the case; for, if the brutal creation had been incapable of suffering pain, they would have been void of all manner of fear; by which means the simpler part would have become a prey, and been devoured up by all such as coveted, and were superior to them; so that a great many of these different species of animals would have been annihilated, and quite cut off from the face of the earth: for it is only upon the account and sense of their suffering pain, that they are so much under terror, and fear of being apprehended and devoured by their enemies, to whom, (*viz.* these species,) the suffering of pain is by no means a loss, but a particular benefit.

Hence, those that maintain, that not only man, but also the brutal tribes, would never have suffered either pain or death, if it had not been

upon the account of what they call original sin, are brothers in iniquity with Job's three friends, who falsely accused him, saying, that if he had not been guilty of some kind of sin or wickedness, God had never afflicted him; for which cause they are condemned of God, for the false surmises they had brought against Job; and, for a proof of Job's vindication, they are directed to petition Job, in order that he might pray and intercede with God on their behalf, that he should not destroy them because of their folly. And for a further proof of this infidelity, that there could have been no affliction or pain, if it had not come in way of punishment for sin, see what numbers of the best of mankind are afflicted, while the wicked often-times live without either pain or trouble. From this it is most evident, that all these afflictions are nothing more than what is natural to animal life, because only an inhabitant of a corporeal and perishing substance.

Further, it hath also been alledged, that it is only upon the account of Adam's sin, that man is become liable to more troubles and diseases than what are common to other animals; but the reason why, that man, or what may rather be said the human body, being more subject to disease and trouble, than other animals, is this, because its being of a finer construction, therefore more delicate in its constitution, and thereby li-

able to a great many different causes, where others are not. Likewise, there is a second reason for man's being more liable to so many different troubles and diseases, than other animals, viz. That of the indulging his appetites in such an unguarded manner, encouraging themselves in the use of almost every thing that can possibly be devoured by them; where, on the contrary, other animals only use that which is adapted to the safety of their constitution.

Thus, I think it is clearly proven from the above, that an ordinary suffering of pain is no manner of punishment, upon the account and guilt of Adam's transgression; for the brutal part of the creation, which is incapable of sin, is, and hath been, in every degree, as much subject to the suffering of pain and of death, as the rational or human species themselves. And whatever person hath stretched forth his hand, in taking away the life of his fellow-creature, is liable to, and ought to suffer death, in way of punishment, upon the account thereof, because he hath taken away that which was not his own, and was as little capable to restore it again. It is certain, thousands have suffered death, as a punishment, for the breach of the divine law; but no ordinary death, pain, or suffering, that comes from God, is intended in the way of punishment; and as it is God's prerogative to give life, it is also his to remove or take it away.

Hence, thousands of mankind, such as infants, and those of riper years, have suffered pain and death, not as a punishment, but only as a very great and rich blessing from God, in giving them heaven; whereas, if they had lived, they might have sinned against him, without either repenting, or forsaking, and thereby would have become heirs of punishment at last. And though children may sometimes come to be cut off in way of punishment to wicked parents, yet it has proven a very great blessing to the children themselves, in preventing them from learning and partaking of their iniquities. But such as may take away the lives of the innocent children of wicked parents, though intended by way of punishment for their parents wickedness, will not pass unpunished. But God himself may lawfully take them away, because the right of life, and of death is his own.

Hence, before I conclude this section, I cannot but observe, how some, in confirmation of this tenet, have alledged, that children suffering affliction, is an infallible proof of their original guilt; because, if they were not guilty, they could never be said to suffer. But in answer to this alledgance, I apprehend there is none will refuse, that some children suffer much trouble and affliction before they go out of the world; but is this any thing more than what all animal life, (though free of sin,) is liable or subject

to, in a more or less degree? No. And besides all this, if childrens suffering were a proof of original guilt, it would prove too much; for there are numbers of children which go out of the world insensibly, in such as faints, or short illness of different kinds, which may be said, in a sense, never to have suffered affliction; therefore must have been free, or have had little or no original sin. But if affliction were the effect of guilt, as alledged by these originalists, all behoved to bear it indiscriminately, in an equal proportion; and, if not equally, it can never possibly be the effect of Adam's transgression, as hath falsely and impiously been ascribed thereto, by ignorant men; it being more evident, from their hypothesis, that if the affection of children were the consequence of Adam's sin, the degree of their suffering would appear to be varied, in proportion, only according to the degree of guilt they were chargeable with.

It may again be argued, that if death does not come to man, in way of punishment, for Adam's transgression, why might not God have removed him by death, without either pain or suffering? The answer is this, That if death had come to man, without either pain or suffering, there is a great part of mankind that would have paid little or no respect either for life or for death: for the suffering of pain, in death, is, in a great measure, the preservation and security of life; for

the terror thereof, they flee for fear, on purpose to evade the one, (viz. the suffering of pain and death,) and preserve the other, (viz. life:) and all this is nothing else than an established and unalterable law, fixed in nature by God himself.

To conclude this section ; Is it possible that any person can be so grossly ignorant, as to imagine that one animal could devour another, and the animal devoured not suffer pain in the time of such an extremity? This, one would think, simply impossible to be conceived. Therefore it is evident from the above, that the whole of nature, without exception, remains an infallible proof against such a doctrine.

Further, if such a thing had been the case, as that man was created proof against death, as asserted by such as are patrons for this heresy, he would neither have sowed nor reaped for the supply of life, nor yet prepared house or shield, in defence of his constitution, against the inclemency of the weather. Yea, while other animals strove to shelter themselves from such storms, as rain, hail, frost, snow, and the like, he would thereby have been insensible of either. But his preparing himself places of cover, to screen him from the tempests of heaven, is a demonstrable proof of his necessity, and an evidence of his being as liable to death as other animals. And though the earth should have spontaneously produced food for his supply, would it not have been

devoured up by other animals? Does not his care, in preserving the same, sufficiently declare his inevitable necessity of being supplied with food, and that animal life could not possibly subsist without the support thereof? This, of itself, being a sufficient evidence to the intelligent world, of man, as an animal, being made liable to death, in his first formation. But there is no arguing against such as are prejudiced in favours of an opinion that strikes at the essence of the Deity; for it is in vain to reason with infidels.

S E C T. XV.

Another proof given in support of this doctrine, wherein they bewray themselves.

AGAIN, I have been in company with a great many of these different originalists, who asserted, that there was not so much as one particular sin committed by any of mankind, but what arose from the effect of Adam's transgression. And as I asked them from what effect did Adam's transgression arise? They said, That it arose from the tempter in the temptation made to Eve. And as I further asked them, If the tempter was now dead, or if he was not as willing to tempt as ever? They answered, That he was not dead, and that they had no doubt either in his willingness or ability to tempt. Having further asked them, If ever they had resisted a temptation? There

was never so much as one, but acknowledged, that they had resisted different temptations. From this I replied, Why did they complain that they were become weaker than Adam, when their very actions declared them to be stronger than he; for the very first temptation that Adam had offered him to sin, he (for all his boasted of strength) embraced it. But as they, however weak, with their own acknowledgment, had rejected different temptations, I further told them, that they had no reason to complain, when, instead of their being weaker than Adam, on the contrary, they were become stronger, and, with their own acknowledgment, had partly resisted, and been master of that which Adam was not. Now, what is all this, but that, instead of proving their own phantastical doctrine, they only become a snare unto themselves.

S E C T. XVI.

Whether is it to be supposed that a dependent, or independent, will be most submissive to their superiors?

AGAIN, there is one thing I would willingly ask of those who hold this imaginary sin, that whether a dependent or independent servant, would be most subject and submissive to the will and service of his master? I suppose, that there are none will refuse but that the dependent ser-

vant would be most submissive in doing the will of him that commandeth. Now, since this is the case, it is certain, that every particular person, in a probationary state, is by far the most submissive in doing the will of his God.

Now, if such a thing had been, as that, by Adam's obedience, every particular person had been secured from falling, or against a probationary state, the infinite goodness of God, which is the original parent of his mercy, could never have issued forth to the sons and children of men: So that mercy, which God calls his darling attribute, by this means, behoved to have remained dormant for ever. For although God be absolutely happy in and of himself, it is not agreeable to his will, that that goodness, or mercy, should be circumscribed to himself alone; but he also, through the same goodness, gave being to different ranks of creatures, (especially to rationals,) that they, by partaking of his goodness and mercy, might become sharers of the same, and be happy also.

S E C T. XVII.

Infant-baptism sustained by the chief patrons of this doctrine, as an infallible proof of what they call original sin, but shown abortive.

AGAIN, I have also heard some of the chief patrons of this tenet, when they were baptizing

children, make an oration in the presence of their hearers, informing them, how much this ordinance of baptism, in the sprinkling or washing the infant with water, was an infallible proof of the guilt or pollution of original sin; when, after all, they were most ignorantly employed in an action, wherein they had not so much as the least authority of one single letter of the alphabet, from the New Testament, for what they were employed in. For the express command from Christ himself, concerning baptism, is this, "Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the holy Spirit." Now, there is not the authority of one syllable from the whole New Testament, neither for infant-baptism, nor to administer the seal of baptism to any, till once they were first instructed in the nature and principles of Christianity. I know there are a few texts of scripture which they have put to the torture and rack, to oblige or force them to speak what they want in favour of their pre-conceived opinions; such as Cornelius, Crispus, the jailor, and the like; that they, and all their households, believed, and were baptized; but there was not one, (such as infants and children,) that was incapable to believe, or, (such as adults, that did not believe,) was baptized; for, if such had been either acquainted, or known any thing of the history and customs of either Rome, or the eastern nations, they would

have known, that there were none came under numeration, either in states or families, under sixteen or twenty years of age; and even in our own nation, viz. Britain, it is fixed, as a stated rule, that no young person can be admitted to give an oath, or their oath sustained as valid, when given under sixteen years; and the reason why, is this, because that under those years the rational powers are not then quite ripe, or properly opened. From this it is most obvious, that youth were not only sustained incapable of being legal evidences; but, for the same reason, they were never judged accountable, nor brought under condign punishment for their actions below these different periods of life. And if it was unjust for man to punish within the limits of the said years, it is infinitely more unjust, to impute to God the punishing the innocent upon account of the guilty; an infant, for the sin of an adult, committed thousands of years before it so much as had an existence; a doctrine, indeed, more suitable to be received by devils than by men. From this it is evident, that when it speaks of all their household being baptized, it means only as many, and no more, than were capable and fit to receive it: for there is nothing more express than these texts are; for they say, that they believed in the Lord, with all their house, or households, and were baptized. Now, it is well known, that both infants and children were altogether inca-

pable to believe, and receive the knowledge of the gospel, therefore could not be baptized: for, when it is said, they believed with all their house, and were baptized, it means only such as were capable to receive it; but, to believe that all that were in their house, such as infants and children, who were incapabale of believing, were baptized, they may, upon the self-same principles, just as well assert, that the very house, or houses themselves, were baptized. This being still sustained as an infallible proof of infant-baptism, because it is said that they were baptized, with all their house, or household, and some times, with all theirs straightway; at other times it is said, that they baptized whole households at once. But, in answer thereto, it may as justly be admitted, when it is said concerning John the Baptist, that there went out unto him all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river Jordan, (confessing their sins;) that there was none thereof remained at home, but what went forth, and were baptized therein. It is to be supposed by this, that there was neither cripple, blind, or such as were sick, and women that lay in child-bed, remained at home, but what went all out, (though unable to walk,) and were baptized of John at Jordan. No; it is not to be supposed; for, on the contrary, it is said, that the Jews sent Priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, what art thou?

If such a thing had actually been the case, that there were none left at home, either in Jerusalem or Judea, by whom were these Priests and Levites sent? If there were none at home to give them commission, it is obvious, they could not possibly be sent. Likewise, when it is said, 1 Kings xi. 16. "For six months did Joab
" remain there with all Israel, until he had cut
" off every male in Edom." Is it to be supposed, by this, that there were none left in the whole land of Palestine, or that there was not a male in the whole family of Edom left alive? No, by no means; for, if this had been the case, that there was not a single male left alive, the whole race of Edom would have been extinct. What is is here observed, is sufficient to prove, that there were none went out to be baptized of John, nor yet received baptism in these houses, but only such as were disposed thereto, or capable through knowledge to receive it.

This, of itself, being sufficient to set forth and expose the absurdity of such sophistical reasoning, as has been advanced, not only in order to impose upon the ignorant, but to deceive a credulous world. What has been here expressed, in the above, may suffice to expose the vanity of that cobweb doctrine, invented by these originalists, in order to support their hypothesis of infant-baptism being an infallible proof of what they call original sin. Again, there being yet

one text more, upon which they lay some particular stress, in favours of infant-baptism, Acts ii. 38, 39. "Repent and be baptised every one of you, for the remission of sins; for the promise is to you and to your children." Now instead of this being a proof of infant-baptism, it proves the very reverse; for here every one is required to repent, before they be baptized; and children are altogether incapable either of the knowledge of sin, or to repent thereof, though they were guilty; for the promise is unto you (*viz.* Jews) and to your children, or posterity, whether you accept thereof or not. This only proves that their posterity had a prior right to baptism unto that society so soon as they were capable of a proper knowledge, and desired to receive it, but no sooner.

Again, it is said by our Saviour, "Suffer little children to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Now, if what they call original sin does not exclude from heaven, why do men cry out against it, as offensive to God; for, to be sure, he will admit nothing there, that is opposite to his nature; or why does any man imagine that any kind of pollution can be admitted into heaven? No, it cannot. Hence, by this we see, that children are entirely free from all manner of pollution, or else they could never possibly be admitted into heaven.

Again, it is expressed by Christ, and said,

“ Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted,
“ and become as little children, ye shall not en-
“ ter into the kingdom of heaven.” Thus, it
is evident, from this text, that little children need
no conversion; and if children need no conver-
sion, they must certainly be free from sin; and
therefore can have no pollution; for the word con-
version means only a change of life; but we see
here, that there is no change of life required of
children. Now if it could be said that any of
these texts mean any thing concerning infant-
baptism, because of pollution, they speak too
much; for they say expressly, that children need
no conversion; neither can they, as being fit
for to be the inhabitants of heaven, have any pol-
lution. Again, it is said by the apostle Paul,
“ Therefore we are buried with him by baptism
“ into death, that like as Christ was raised up
“ from the dead, by the glory of the Father,
“ even so also we should walk in newness of
“ life;” the meaning of which is only this, that
it signified persons being plunged under water,
in baptism. When they became Christians, they
as it were become dead, and buried unto the
vices and pollutions of the world; and that the
raising them again above water, in baptism,
meant the raising them up to walk in newness
of life, that they might serve the living and true
God, agreeable to that rule which he hath set be-
fore, and required of us in the gospel. From

this, I suppose, it is sufficiently shown in the above, that these originalists have no authority from the New Testament, for any such notions, as the pollution of infants, or of infant-baptism. For there was never such a thing as infant-baptism heard of in the Christian world, under the first state of the primitive church; for it only crept in towards the latter end of the second century, after that Popery was conceived, before she came to the birth. Also when infant-baptism first took place, it made no small confusion in the Christian world. For, in the primitive state, such as were to be baptised, were to be continued, as candidates, under the name of catechumens, for a certain time, till once they were fit to be initiated, and admitted, as members of that society. Now, I apprehend, that I have sufficiently discovered, and detected, the different frauds of these arch-deceivers, and made it evident, how much they have imposed upon the ignorance of the laity, in the Christian world, the pollution of which, to wit, the holding of this tenet, both by Papists and Protestants, still remains, and has never as yet been removed, and stands in very great need of being washed away.

To conclude this section; such as are patrons for infant-baptism alledge, that this ceremony lays parents under an obligation to instruct their children in the knowledge of Christianity; but

such as will not instruct children from principle, will never perform this duty from obligation. For the better understanding the dispensing this ordinance to infants, I shall illustrate the same as follows. If one were ordered to present a certain quantity of wine at the table of a great personage, whether would it be most prudent to bottle and seal it up, from out of the working vat, while it was a preparing, or that after he had used his utmost care to bring it up to a proper state, that he might thereby ascertain its quality, before it were sealed up for the master's use?

In the one, he knew whether it would be good or bad; but in the other, he did not. The former case is similar to the baptizing of infants; and the latter to those who are come to knowledge. If the former was culpable for sealing up the wine before it came to its proper state, whereby he might know its quality; the latter must be incomparably more so, for applying the seals of initiation to the child, before he knew whether it would be a proper member of such a society. For however wrong it may be to put the king's stamp upon goods, before they have inspected their quality, it is infinitely worse to apply the seal of baptism to persons, before they know whether they deserve it or not. And however unjust it is to stamp, as sufficient, goods of a bad quality, it is, in every respect, more unjust still, to put the seals of God upon such as are

wicked, which is no less than a disgrace to religion.

S E C T. XVIII.

Showing wherein the nature of Adam's sin consisted, and that every one was to be punished for his own iniquity.

I SHALL again essay to show, and point out, part of the deceit held forth by the chief patrons of this tenet. In the first place, it must be observed, what was expressed to Adam, concerning this matter as required of him. Now the command is this, that in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die. Die; in what manner did he die? Only by sin, interrupting a free and perfect enjoyment of his God; for before he sinned, there was nothing to interrupt him in the enjoyment of that perfect state of happiness, that subsisted betwixt him and his God; but he had no sooner eat, and transgressed the commandment, than the pernicious guilt of sin, and anguish of mind, interveened, like a thick cloud, betwixt him and his God. Now, it is evident that the breach of this law or commandment, according to strict justice, exclusive of mercy, was surely a kind of death, or dying; which I apprehend, was the death threatened to Adam, because he, as it might be said, had by sin forfeited the favour of his God, had not that inexpressible and

infinite attribute of his rich mercy, just as it had been longing to take vent, and issue forth, in its first action towards him, by which it came, as a refreshing shower of consolation unto his soul.

Again, we all know that the penalty of sin is death, if the mercy of God do not interpose in his behalf to prevent it. But did God say, or promise, to Adam, that his temporal life should not be interrupted, neither by sickness, trouble, nor death itself? No; of this there is not the least mention of one syllable concerning any such matter. Again, as it is said elsewhere, as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive. Now, there is no doubt, that as Adam was the first man, and although some of his posterity should have been dead before him, yet he himself was the first personal substance that death could have had the opportunity to have operated upon. For which reason, it may very justly be said, that in Adam all die; and as Christ, in his resurrection, was the first that rose from the dead, therefore it may as justly be said, that in Christ shall all be made alive, because he himself is said to be the resurrection and the life. Again, the next thing that is to be observed is this, when God threatened this punishment upon Adam, did he say, that the punishment thereof should descend to his posterity? No, by no means; for when God speaks to Adam, he speaks not in the plural, but only in the singular; for as there were two per-

sons, he might have very justly spoken in the plural; but for distinction's sake, to testify that every person was to bear, and be punished for his own iniquity, he speaks in singular, thus, that in the day thou eatest thereof, not you, but thou shalt surely die. Now, if this sin and punishment had been to descend to his posterity, the commandment would have been after this manner, that in the day thou eatest thereof, not only thou alone, but thou and thy posterity shall surely die, or you and your posterity shall surely die; but there is no such prohibition; which is a clear and infallible evidence, to every unprejudiced person of judgment, that every singular person was only to suffer for his own iniquities.

To conclude this section; if such are patrons for this superstitious tenet, which has been invented to the dishonour of God, would but admit, as authentic, the words delivered to us by our Saviour, they would have no room to doubt, for he himself expressly declareth, "that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God;" if this be sustained as just, the controversy must of necessity be at an end.

SECTION XIX.

The absurdity of this doctrine illustrated under the following figures;

- 1st, Respecting a king; and one of his subjects.*
- 2d, Of a parent acting for children, in things coming under the power of their acquisition.*
- 3d, A parent risking by gambling, the life of his child against an estate.*

IT is again said, that Adam was the parent of all mankind, and that there was very much depended upon his behaviour in paradise, towards his descendents; for it is said, that his posterity was to receive and enjoy very great blessings, such as everlasting life, by keeping the law of his God; and there was as great a curse threatened against him, such as everlasting death and punishment, if he transgressed the law, by breaking the commandment, and this not only against himself alone, but also his posterity.

Upon which account it is argued, that if Adam's posterity was to receive and inherit, by becoming heirs to such great blessings as depended upon the keeping the commandment, such as everlasting life, they were likewise intitled, as heirs, to all the curses due, such as temporal and eternal death, which was the penalty threatened in the breaking of the law. In answer to this, the omniscieny of God, who knoweth

all things, whereby he was morally certain, before ever he gave Adam a being, that he was to transgress his law; therefore it alters the case; for it made no difference to his posterity, more than he had created them sinners at first, and put them to death, in way of punishment, for that which they were never guilty of; to Adam there was a difference, but to his posterity there was none.

Therefore, to set this in a just and proper light, I shall essay to illustrate it a little, by the example of a certain king, and one of his subjects, concerning some different benefits granted, on condition, for both himself and family; the narrative is as follows, viz.

If a king should contract with a certain subject, in bestowing of large favours upon both him and his posterity, upon condition of his keeping a certain commandment; and if he broke the said conditions of the agreement, that both he and his posterity should be stripped of these favours, and put to death. Thus you say, that if he transgress that law, the king might very justly put both him and all his posterity to death; but the nature and circumstances of the lawfulness or unlawfulness, justice or injustice, depend altogether upon the knowledge or ignorance of both parties contracting in the agreement. As concerning him that was the subject, he might have agreed for himself; but, for him

to contract for his posterity, was a most precipitant action. If he was assured that he was not capable to fulfil the agreement, as towards himself, it was self-murder; and concerning his posterity it was no less a crime, and in every degree as culpable as if he had cut all their throats while they were fast asleep. So that if he had had as many lives as there were individuals in his posterity, it was too little to have given for them. And as for the king, to have contracted ignorantly with one of his subjects, not only for himself alone, but also for his posterity, upon the pain of death, it was a most unjustifiable action. And if the king was morally certain, that this subject was incapable to keep, and would certainly break this commandment, he was no less culpable, but in every degree as guilty as he had cut off both him and his posterity, and put them to death, without either contract or agreement. There was a city of refuge provided for them that were guilty of felony, that is by taking away one's life from ignorance and mischance; but, for him that was guilty of death, not from ignorance, but from knowledge, there was no city of refuge, because it was murder; and therefore required life for life. As concerning the justness or unjustness of what is specified in the above, as I observed before, turns altogether upon the knowledge or ignorance of the parties contracting in the agreement. If the king was pos-

possessed of a foreknowledge that this subject would forfeit the clauses stipulated in the above agreement, then, certainly, he was most culpable, and to blame, because he knew assuredly of the most dismal fate of both his subject and his posterity. And by all this he was more culpable still, because he received no benefit nor advantage thereby. For when one receives no benefit, it is still the greater evidence of some inconsistent spirit of prejudice, that is still lying latent in the mind of the being that hath taken advantage of the other, without any profit to itself. For a foreknowledge in the one, and an ignorance in the other, is the very same as of a person that was possessed of his full sight, taking the advantage of one that was entirely blind, and was incapable to judge for himself. For the greater or higher proffers this king made to this his subject, under his ignorance, while he himself was possessed of a prior sight, he was all that more capable of betraying and insnaring his subject, and cutting off both him and his posterity together, from that life which God at first had bestowed, and possessed them with, in this world, as probationers for that life which is to come.

Again, a parent may have a power to act for the benefit of his own children, in such things as come under the power of his acquisition; but whenever the deed exceeds the power of the creature to perform, it is forfeited and lost, so as never

to be acquired, the action becomes null and void, because he acted in a deed when lost, exceeded his power to acquire or restore again.

For instance, if a parent in way of gambling, should bet, by laying the life of one of his children, against a large estate, for the behoof of that child, this action ceases to be valid, because he unwarrantably risked the life of his child, which if lost, was altogether impossible ever so much as to acquire, and restore to him. And although a person should enter into the same kind of contract, to lay and risk his own life against an estate, in way of gambling, this deed becomes null and void also; because he risked that life, he only possessed from God, which, if lost, was out of his power, as a creature, either to acquire or restore to himself again. We may infer from what has been observed in the above, that it sufficiently proves the gross and absurd inconsistency in ascribing to God the making a contract with Adam for his posterity, and, for Adam's transgression, not only to punish them temporally, but to torment his posterity eternally. And not only this, but their also ascribing to Adam to have believed that God had required such an unwarrantable agreement of him.

Some may indeed object, saying, What is all this? It is no less than to quarrel, and call God in question for his procedure. In answer thereto, Is all that is laid in his name, to be received as

from him? Certainly not; for there is nothing that can possibly be so gross, but what men may ascribe its authority to God; and if we are not to try its quality by the rectitude of his nature, whatever may vainly be said to come from him, we have no right to reject, but must receive it as divine. And if all be admitted as divine, that is said to come from him, then we may bid adieu to all true religion; for there is no religion but what is said, by its different votaries, to have come from God, and also claim him for its author, though even opposite to his very nature. Therefore it is evident, from this, that the Apostle's advice is by far the best of all others, where he bids us try every spirit, that we may know whether they are of God or not. From this it is our duty to try whatever doctrines, that are held forth in the name of God, that we may know whether they will agree with the rectitude of his nature or not, before we receive them as divine. For instance, if a number of persons were going to set out on a voyage to a distant country, would they not make it their business to inspect the stanchness of the vessel in which they were to take their passage? Certainly they would. Therefore it is not more necessary still to inspect that which is said to concern our eternal interest. But if it shall be said, that we have no occasion to inspect a vessel in which so many has already embarked before us. In answer

thereto, there are ten Mahometans who have reposed their confidence and eternal interest in the Alcoran, and the different articles contained therein, for one Christian that holds the doctrine of original sin. But do these numbers give the Alcoran a valid right to receive its authority from God? No, by no means.

Further, if we were to receive a piece of currency, would not we inspect its weight and quality? Most certainly. If therefore it be necessary to try the weight and quality of a piece of coin before we receive it as value, is it not more necessary still to try such things as are given in the name of God, upon which our eternal interest depends, that we may know whether they come from him or not? Undoubtedly. Hence we may learn what great satisfaction redounds to the mind of man from the knowledge of truth. Therefore, whatever is said to come from God, if agreeable with his nature, may be received as from him; for every thing that agrees therewith, it is our duty to receive and obey, whether it be said to proceed from God or not; and if not conformable thereto, it is our duty to reject, whether it be reported to come from him or not. Therefore we may judge from this, what it is to say, that a good and just God would consign over the fate of a world to one individual, and that their eternal happiness or misery should depend upon the single act of a fallible creature,

whom he was morally certain would bring about their damnation, is a doctrine sufficiently gross to be received by devils, and not by men. For if it should please God to make whatever number of worlds the one day, and if it should be his will to annihilate the same, with all their different inhabitants, the next, in this he would have done them no injustice. But to say, that God would so much as punish the smallest insect that he has made, when innocent, and for no fault of its own, but only for the offence of another, which it could neither foresee or prevent; this would be no less than to make God unjust, by their ascribing to him such an action, in order to support their own hypothesis, which would be no less than downright blasphemy.

With respect to the above, if it shall be said, that an insect cannot be punished, because not a rational being; neither can an infant, whose rational powers are lying dormant, and as much, in every degree, incapable of the knowledge of either good or evil as the insect, be punished for the sin of another, when it may be said to be insensible of its own existence; and to assert its condemnation, would be absurd, because to the dishonour of God, (who is infinitely perfect,) in ascribing to him such an action, as to punish the innocent upon account of the guilty; a child for a sin committed by an adult thousands of years before it so much as had a being, which it could

neither possibly foresee or prevent. This is a doctrine that all the sophistry in the world is incapable to reconcile with the justice and goodness of God. But what need I say this; for, when once men are bred up, or embarked, though in one of the grossest of heresies, there is no action can possibly be so base, but what they will dare to ascribe the performance thereof to God, for its confirmation, especially when the authority thereof depends upon it.

To conclude this section; it is morally certain, from the very rectitude, nature, and perfections of the Deity, that it is impossible that ever a just and true God would punish one being unjustly for another's fault; for the transgression can never be said to be theirs, when they were not present, or had a proxy for them, nor had it in their power to appoint one in their stead, by reason of their not having an existence.

S E C T. XX.

Some further evidences, from different texts of scripture, in order to refute this tenet.

AGAIN, we see that when God speaks to the Jews by the prophet Ezekiel, chap. xviii. and likewise part of chap. xxxiii. with the rest of his revealed will agreeing thereto, he speaks to them, in the singular number, after this manner, that every one shall suffer for his own per-

sonal guilt, and die for his iniquity, and that the son should neither suffer nor die for the iniquity of the father; nor that the father should suffer or die for the iniquity of the son, but that every one should suffer for his own personal iniquity. The next thing that is to be considered, is this, of what kind of death this is meant by the prophet? whether it is to be understood a spiritual or a temporal?

Now, if we should suppose this a temporal death, it is only a separation of the soul from the body. We know, indeed, that God does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men; neither is he willing that any should perish, but that all should turn unto him, that they may have life. But yet God may very justly punish either a person or people, when guilty, (if not repenting,) with both temporal and spiritual death, especially when they become incorrigible sinners. But if we should suppose this a temporal death, we see from the prophet, that if he turned from his iniquities, he was not to be punished, nor put to death upon the account thereof, which could never be the case, the prophet at no time setting aside the judicial law. We know assuredly, that God no where hath either required or commanded, that if a capital sinner should be convicted, and condemned for his crime, and that altho' he should repent, and be sorry for his iniquity, that he is to be released, or set at liberty, and death

not executed upon him. For he saith expressly, that if he shall turn from his iniquity, he shall not die, but shall live. Now, by this it appears to be a spiritual death that is here meant; for he expressly saith, that the soul that sinneth shall die. And if a spiritual death, it is clearly evident, that Adam's sin did not descend to his posterity; for if Adam's posterity became spiritually dead, by Adam's transgression, they by no means could die a second time; for there is nothing can die, but that which liveth; for that which is dead, can never die, till once it revive, and live again. But here it is expressly said, that the soul that sinneth shall die. Hence it is clear from this, that Adam's posterity, before they actually sinned against God's holy law, in a spiritual manner, that they were as free, and unchargeable with the guilt of Adam's sin, or of being spiritually dead, through Adam's transgression, as Adam himself was before that he transgressed the law of his God. From hence it is evident, that according as expressed by the prophet, that every particular person shall both bear and die for his own iniquity, without turning therefrom. Again, the prophet saith, by the direction of God's Spirit, Repent and turn yourselves from all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Now, if this people had been spiritually dead through Adam's transgression, in what manner could they either have

repented, or turned themselves to God, in forsaking their iniquities? for it is impossible, that a body, when once dead, can either act, move, or stir itself. Again, he saith, Cast away your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart, and a new spirit; for why will ye die, O house of Israel. Now, is it possible that they, when spiritually dead, as Adam's posterity is represented by these originalists, could either cast away their transgressions, and make unto themselves a new heart, or a new spirit? No, it is impossible. And, again, the prophet repeats the same words, to turn themselves, which is a demonstrable proof, that man is not spiritually dead, but is possessed with abilities of turning from sin unto God, or he, as being just, would never, by his prophet, have required it of them. Again, it is also expressed by Isaiah i. 2. by the Spirit of God, saying "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me." From this it is evident, that these, while they were children, were no rebels to God; for God saith expressly, that they only became rebels after he had brought them up.

Again, if this had been the case, as is expressed by these originalists, that they were corrupted by Adam's transgression, they were just as much rebels, while in an infant-state and childhood,

and heirs of hell, according to Augustine, as they were after transgressing God's holy law; but he expressly declareth to us otherwise, that they were not rebels, but that they only became so, through their obstinacy and disobedience.

To conclude this section; there is one thing necessary to be observed, that, when it is said, by the prophet Ezekiel, that by the fathers having eaten four grapes, the childrens teeth were set on edge, the meaning thereof was, that the fathers had sinned, and through their wickedness, the children, by learning thereof followed their bad example.

S E C T. XXI.

What is given us by God, in our first formation, we may forfeit the same to our own loss, but cannot possibly to the hurt of another.

AGAIN, from what has been expressed, by these two different prophets, as observed in the last section, it is clear to a demonstration, that none of Adam's posterity, from the first moment that he received his being from God, down to the last person that shall descend from him, cannot possibly be corrupted in their natures, by way of ordinary generation, through Adam's transgression. For to Adam was given the primitive purity, which was entailed, by the infallible justice of God, to him and his posterity,

till once he and they came personally to forfeit the same themselves, to their own irreparable loss, which can never be made up by them alone, independent of God. And this purity aforesaid, (as being confirmed by the justice of God,) like every terrestrial entail, (confirmed by men,) can never be broke through, no not even by the possessor himself, who is only a life-renter, and may break through, sell, or forfeit the same, (to wit, the life-rent,) and suffer the loss thereof to his own hurt; but the estate being secured to the heir or heirs of entail, against any kind of loss or disadvantage, that could possibly descend from him to his posterity or heirs whatsoever, they could never possibly be hurt thereby; the one being only a confirmation by men, depends thereon; but the other being an act, or confirmation of the unalterable justice and goodness of the true God, is thereby infallibly secured in him.

S E C T. XXII.

The doctrine held forth, that Christ would never have come into our world, except upon account of original sin, exclusive of actual transgressions, exploded.

AGAIN, I shall point out another invention, used by these different originalists, in favours of this sin, where they affirm, that if there had been

no original sin, Christ had never been sent into this our world, to take away sin, and proclaim the pardon of actual transgressions to the sons or children of men, upon their repentance and amendment of life. Now, I would therefore ask all such, from whom, or where, they have got their authority for this affirmation? It is from the devil to be sure. For they have not so much as the authority of one syllable from either the Old or New Testament, for proof of any such assertion. Now all the reason that they can advance for such an argument, is only that of Adam's sin, which they say was the first source and cause from whence all actual transgressions proceeded, and that if Adam had not transgressed the law of his God, none of his posterity could possibly have transgressed God's law, in the breaking of his commandments for the future, by which Adam's posterity would have been confirmed in a state of infallibility ever after. In answer thereto, I affirm this to be another bare chimerical assertion, without the authority, as was observed in the above, of so much as one syllable from either Old or New Testament to support it. Now, according to this doctrine, if Adam should have stood till he had one, two, three children, or more, and then had fallen, and after he fell should have had one, two, three, or more children besides the former before the fall, what was to be the consequence thereof. The conse-

quence, according to the above doctrine, the first children would have been confirmed against falling, and all the rest, (to wit, the latter children,) left to perish without mercy forever. Such a doctrine as this is most certainly shocking. Again, if any of the former or latter families, as they may properly enough be so styled, should have been joined in marriage with one another, will any of these originalists inform me, how it would have fared with their posterity. For, according to the forefaid doctrine, both these different degrees of children, that descended from these families, behoved to be both left, and to have died, in way of punishment without mercy, and to have lived for ever independent of mercy, which is nothing less than a palpable contradiction.

Again, as one of these originalists, in haranguing his hearers, in order to prove his doctrine, concerning this favourite theme, he said, that there was but only this one single tree of knowledge, and that when Adam's posterity came to be dispersed over the world, it would have been altogether out of their power to have eaten of it, by which means they would have been confirmed forever.

Now this ignoramus might very easily have understood, that the fruit, or at least in the fruit, was the seed of the tree, by which seed, this tree was capable of multiplicity of the same species,

and of being dispersed over the earth, as Adam's posterity was, although there had been no more at first, than this one tree, to which Adam was exposed.

Again, to return to the subject of Christ's not coming into our world, except it had been upon the account of original sin. Thus, to suppose that if Adam should have stood, and his posterity to have transgressed the law of their God, in an actual manner, was the rich mercy of God never to have taken vent, through Christ, for their relief, where there was such objects for rich mercy to operate upon. A strange, yea, a very strange doctrine indeed, which favours very much of them from whom it proceeds. Upon the very self same principles, it may with just as much propriety be affirmed, that if Adam had stood, and all the rest of the inhabitants of these different worlds, that are dispersed through wide and immense space, had fallen, that God would not have had mercy upon them, but that they should have been left to perish forever, although they all were the children of the very self same original parent, as much as he, (to wit, Adam,) or his posterity. Now, if this be the case, that Christ would never have come unto our world, had it not been upon the account of what they call original sin, and that he only came thereto upon the account thereof; by this means Adam could receive no benefit by him, (to wit, Christ,)

for he was entirely free of what they call original sin; for what they call original sin in others, was nothing more than a mere actual transgression to Adam. Therefore, if Christ came not unto this our world, to deliver mankind from actual transgressions, by this means, Adam was excluded from the mercy of God, and behoved to have perished for ever.—But, to conclude this section, of Christ's not having come into this our world, had it not been upon the account of Adam's first sin, may be understood, that of the pardon of what they call original guilt, their actual transgressions were removed forever; or else were thereby supposed so trifling, as not worthy of being called in question.

S E C T. XXIII.

That a child dying the same day in which it was born, went immediately into eternal damnation, for the sin of Adam, as advanced by the original parent of this doctrine, but found to be absurd.

AGAIN, as concerning this doctrine of what they call original sin, as it hath been asserted by its great champion, to wit, Augustine, who is the original author, and first parent thereof, That a child dying the same day in which it is born, (mark this) enters immediately into eternal damnation, upon the account of Adam's sin. A

shocking conception indeed; a doctrine sufficiently coarse to be expressed by the devil himself, because it redounds to the dishonour of the great God.

Now if this were possible, that such a doctrine could be admitted of as true, that millions of rational beings were sent to hell, the place of punishment, before ever they were capable to know that they even so much as had an existence, in this our world. If it should be asked by these infants, upon what account they were brought into this state of misery? and in answer thereto were told, by the inhabitants thereof, that it was upon the account of Adam's first sin. It is replied by such, (to wit, these infants,) that they, at that time, had not so much as a being; therefore were altogether incapable to employ him, (to wit, Adam,) in commission, either by vote or proxy for them; by which means it was impossible, by whatever rules, either from justice or equity, to punish them upon his account. For, according to this doctrine, if God knew that Adam would certainly sin, as he assuredly did, it made no difference to his posterity, nor yet to justice and equity, whether that he or Adam committed them over to this state of misery; to Adam there was a difference, but it made none to his posterity, more than they had all been committed over to this state of misery at their first formation, even as although Adam had ne-

ver sinned. For where is the difference betwixt her that takes the child, as soon as ever it is born, and throws it into the ocean, or of her that takes the child, when delivered thereof, and lays it down within flood mark, that it may immediately be swept off by the tide; or, in other words, who delivers over the child herself to another, to be thrown unto wild beasts, in order that it may be devoured thereby. There is only a small difference in the actions, but none in the consequence; for the one murdered the child herself, and the other left it to perish, or gave it unto another on purpose that it might be devoured. The above is exactly similar to the case of Adam's posterity; for it made no difference to them, whether they were committed over to damnation by him that gave them a being, or were given up by God to Adam, to be committed over by him to eternal destruction or misery; the case was equally the same. Now what a most horrid and shocking theology is this, that millions of millions of rational beings, for no fault of their own, but only for an offence committed by another, (viz. an adult person) thousands of years before ever they so much as had an existence, should be given up, and delivered over to eternal damnation without mercy for ever, upon the account thereof. Now is it possible, that any doctrine whatever can be so gross, as that, when once men have had the misfortune to be educat-

ed therein, yea, though it should not only have been invented, but manufactured in that infernal academy, by the sophistical powers of darkness, but what its different chevaliers will propagate and patronize with all their might. Now, is it so much as possible, that when all the different powers of darkness, with hell itself, when combined together, could have been capable to have formed more inconsistent ideas of the Deity? No, not possible. And yet, after all, these are the productions of that ancient father, viz. Augustine the monk, who is commonly styled by his followers, "the doctor of grace." But is there any doctrine or nostrum whatever, that, when once it hath received the sanction of fallible men, can possibly be so gross as not to be received and swallowed down by a weak, superstitious, bigotted, and credulous world, especially when it hath acquired the above authority, and it would even be held as sacrilege itself to call it in question.

But there is one thing most certain, which seldom misses to take place, that when once men (though from misfortune,) have been bred up under whatever doctrines, or set of tenets, though diametrically opposite to the very nature and perfections of the Deity, they will not only stand and cleave fast thereunto, but will even despise and reject every invitation, though of the highest demonstration, rather than be convinced of their mistake. Sometimes this ariseth from a

pride, and sometimes from a weak and bigotted superstition. The former, though they should be convinced in their own minds, are ashamed to discover their ignorance, having dwelt so long therein. The latter, because of its antiquity, are afraid even so much as to call it in question. And it is almost next to impossible to such as have been bred up under this doctrine, of what they call original sin, to part with it, but will even hold it fast, though no less than at the expence of both the honour and justice of God. And it is commonly the case, that they will sacrifice both, before they will part with one counterfeit doctrine, to which the name of God hath been most impiously forged and ascribed. And whatever doctrines men come to hold, as may infringe the justice and goodness of God, they are not only to his dishonour, but are nothing less than downright blasphemy. And on purpose to establish this strange and extravagant doctrine, we see what a woful shift and necessity its different votaries have been driven to, even no less than at the expence, viz. of justice, goodness, and truth, in order to dispossess and rob God of his veracity, and make it give way, in order that this their favourite hypothesis may take place.

Hence, how many thousand volumes have been wrote to the dishonour of God, under the sanction of his authority, in which he has been physically represented as inconsistent with him-

self: But our Saviour brought no such doctrines with him from God; for there is not one syllable in all that he taught and delivered unto us, but what doth most expressly coincide with the nature of the Deity; and whatever will not correspond therewith, though delivered in his name, under the sanction of his authority, by whomsoever it will, it is our duty to despise and reject as vain, because not conformable thereto.

Lastly, and to conclude this section; In what light would a person be looked upon, if he should lend another a certain sum of money, (which sum he was to pay again with usury,) and then put him under the government of a second person, of which he was certain would rob and dispossess him of the whole; and yet, after all, require the return of said sum, with interest due thereupon, under pain of death. Yea, however odious this action may appear to men, it is no more odious than in what light they have thereby represented the true and ever blessed God, as if committing over the whole human race to Adam, before they so much as had an existence, who was certain would rob and dispossess the same of that which God himself had given, and would also require of them again, under the penalty, not only of temporal, but also of both spiritual and eternal death. This is a doctrine, indeed, however gross it may appear to men, it is in no respect grosser than they from whom it proceeds. Thus far, as has been illu-

strated in the above, may suffice to elucidate the fallacious nature of that blasphemous doctrine, invented through the heated imagination of visionary monks, to the dishonour of God, ascribing the sanction of his authority thereto, in order that they may not only the better extend the boundaries of their infernal dominion, but also maintain the power thereof over the souls and consciences of men, by threatening inevitable damnation to all such as will not receive it.

S E C T. XXIV.

No person hath a right to contract for others, without their authority; for, if he do, the action becomes null and void.

AGAIN, there is a doctrine much in vogue now-a-days, which is held in very great esteem in the Christian world, being this, that a person is altogether incapable, and can do nothing towards its own reformation or salvation; which is no less than a most dangerous and absurd doctrine. For to say that God requires of us that which we are altogether incapable to perform, in what a light is this to represent God, acting only as in the place of a mere tyrant, and not as a good sovereign. But this is altogether false; for God never requires more of any of his creatures than what they are capable to fulfil; and it is only by being in their power to perform, where-

by they become sinners, and that also is, by not obeying that which he hath required of them. Therefore such a doctrine as this can by no means be true, but must certainly be a notorious mistake. But, in answer thereto, they vainly tell you, that, by the consequence of Adam's sin, all his posterity lost their ability to perform; and although that man has lost his power to fulfil, yet God hath by no means lost his right to require, But, in answer to this objection, Adam could have agreed for himself, but to undertake for his posterity, it was what he was altogether incapable to do, because, as there were none of his posterity present, neither was it possible that he could be deputed for them, either by vote or proxy, as there were none of his posterity so much as come into existence, to give him commission or authority, either for themselves or others. In like manner, when the different qualified freeholders of a county are pleased to chuse or elect a commissioner, by vote, to send to parliament, if he either betrays, or sells them, they are obliged to stand to his deed, because he is both cloathed, and deputed by their authority; upon which account he becomes their representative, therefore they are obliged to stand to his act and deed, whether for or against them. But if this commissioner should take this office upon himself, without being elected and invested by the power and authority of the above different qualified freeholders

of that county, his act and deed becomes null and void; and therefore can never militate against them, to their hurt or prejudice, because he was neither elected nor received commission from them. So, in like manner, it may be inferred from the above, that Adam's act or deed, although it had been designed by him, (as it never was,) could neither merit or militate any thing against, or yet descend to his posterity.

Again, God certainly knew that man was to fall, but Adam did not know. Now, in what a light is this to represent God; as not only taking the advantage of the ignorant, viz. Adam, but even of all his posterity, that were not so much as brought into being by him. This would have been a piece of injustice that was not possible could be applied to, or acted by any but a mere tyrant; and therefore was impossible that it could ever be so much as imputed to God. Hence it is most certain, that a doctrine which represents God in such a notorious light, as ascribing to him an act of the highest injustice, must certainly be a most blasphemous doctrine. For to say, that one can be capable of injustice, what will they not do, or stop at? For, as one most justly observes, and expresses it, if you call a person unjust, you may call him any thing you will. Now, although God should make a world to-day, and though innocent, and if it should be his will to cut them all off the next day, though guilty of

no fault, it cannot be said, that he hath so much as done them the very least injustice, because they were his property, and were not cut off in way of punishment; but to say, that he will require more of his creatures than what was in their power to perform, and to punish the innocent for no fault of their own, but only upon the account of the guilty, is a thing that can never so much as be imputed to God; and is perhaps one of the highest aspersions that can possibly be thrown out against him: for God will never reap where he hath not sown, nor search where he hath not strawed: for, it being impossible for God to sin, not from a want of power, but only because he is holy, just, and good; it must therefore, in every degree, be as impossible for a just God to punish the innocent, upon account of the guilty, one person for the sin of another, committed thousands of years before it so much as had an existence, which sin it could by no means either foresee or prevent, or to require more of his creatures than what they are capable to perform; these, with others of like nature, being unjust, are impossible with him. Therefore, Christian, this being now evident from the above, thou needest not be afraid of whatever threats, menaces, and vollies of anathemas, are issued out against thee, for rejecting of this blasphemous heresy, with others of like nature, in which God is thereby pointed out in such an unjust and

despicable light. Yea, and whether thou believe it or not, whatever is paid to such, for patronizing doctrines inconsistent with his nature, although they should falsely ascribe the sanction of his authority thereto, in order that it may be received as divine, it is only paid in favours of the devil, and not unto God, because to his dishonour. Christian, it is therefore now high time to consider with thyself, how thou wilt answer for these things, when thou must stand in a disembodied state before God, who will at last be thy impartial judge.

Again, how often have I heard some of the chief patrons for this ancient heresy, binding over ignorant parents, in the baptizing of their children, to believe that the same little child, which they had just lately received from God, (with others) were by nature, through the guilt of Adam's first sin, laid under the inevitable damnation of hell. If they had only required the belief of such a thing, as that the devil made the world, this would have been nothing more than a notorious lie; but to require the belief, and as it were to swear to the damnation of said child, to the dishonour of God, in obedience to what was required by the priest, is, in every respect, as much as to swear, that God is unjust; which is no less than the greatest of blasphemy.

S E C T. XXV.

Showing that there is no inconsistency in understanding God, as acting agreeable to the nature of his perfections; though some, most impiously, would have him act otherwise.

AGAIN, in connection with the above, I shall take notice of another subterfuge, used by these different chevaliers for what they call original sin, wherein they shelter themselves, in order to evade the justice of God taking place, as if that he should not admit the nature of his justice to regulate the government of his will, in being directed thereby. Hence, from the above, some have indeed pled upon the sovereignty of God, that as he hath an absolute right, and can neither be called in question, nor is accountable to any for his actions, he may very justly act toward his creatures in whatever respect and direction he pleaseth, as one whose will is his law. But in answer thereto, it is simply impossible that ever it can please a just God to act inconsistent with the rectitude of his nature; and it is most certain, that God can never act by any other method, in way of a law, but what is agreeable to the nature of his divine perfections. For, it is not by reason that one cannot be called in question, or because he is accountable to none for his actions, that can give the same actions a right to become good and justifiable with a holy

and just God. And therefore whoever will have him to act otherwise, than what is justifiable with his nature, would, upon account of their immoral desires, have God to act altogether inconsistent with himself; which is nothing less than downright blasphemy. And this is generally the case with all such who refuse God the proper use of his own moral perfections. For they rather incline, that the rectitude of his will should submit to their perverse desires and corrupt inclinations, than that God should think proper to regulate himself by the nature of these perfections, wherein it may justly be supposed his essence may consist of. Hence, it is not to be expected that any person will be so grossly ignorant, as vainly to imagine from the above, that I should mean to limit God; for God can be limited by none but by himself, whose boundaries being the unchangeable rectitude of his divine nature, to wit, such as his holiness, his justice, his goodness, and truth.

Lastly, and to conclude this section. Wo be unto such men, who, in order to support their own wild hypothesis, would have God's sovereignty prostrated to that degree, as to become subservient in support of whatever doctrines they are pleased to apply it for sanction; yea, though diametrically opposite to the very essence of God. This being the case, whereby his perfections are often-times constrained to clash one against ano-

ther, and thereby made inconsistent with himself, which in so doing, they do not only dishonour God, but are also guilty of blasphemy. And to reject such doctrines, as held forth by men, under God's authority, inconsistent with the rectitude of his nature, by confounding each attribute with another, is no less than to be ranked amongst the worst of infidels, by some of their anti-rational priests, and others of like nature, at enmity with their best powers, they at first received from God. But there is one thing I would ask, Whether is he that maintains a just vindication of that divine harmony, which subsists amongst the different perfections of the Deity, or he that confoundeth them one with another, the greatest infidel? The solution being so easy, that he who runs may declare it; but this I shall refer to the determination of the candid reader.

Further, there is one thing more I would gladly ask, Whether is he who models out the nature of his religion by the rectitude of the true God, or he that measures out, and holds doctrines inconsistent therewith, to expect his approbation? This I shall also refer to the impartial and unprejudiced reader. Hence it may be observed, that there is still one salvo remains, it being a balsam that seldom fails, in virtue of which they are never at a loss to reconcile whatever inconsistencies they impiously ascribe to God for sanction; and though they (viz. these inconsi-

stencies,) should neither correspond with the rectitude of his nature, nor with common sense itself, because contrary to both; yet they confidently affirm, that we are not to call them in question, but are bound to believe them, as of undoubted authority; upon which principle, there is no religion or doctrine whatever can possibly be so gross, but what may be received as divine, especially by the ignorant and superstitious; but such as have attained to a proper degree of knowledge, never will.

S E C T. XXVI.

An objection made in favours of this doctrine, that such as died in infancy could not have any benefit by Christ, but found false.

AGAIN, it hath been objected, and said by those who are the chief patrons of this doctrine, that if there had been no original sin in the world, children that died in infancy and childhood could not have reaped any benefit by Christ, neither in his life, nor in his death; and therefore, could never join in that song with the blessed above, to him that hath redeemed us from our iniquities. But, in answer to this, if his present Majesty should be pleased to send his chief physician to his army, in order to inform them to be aware against the contagion of a certain plague, whereby one and all of them were in

danger and liable not only to be infected, but cut off thereby; and in order for their preservation, he prescribed a remedy, as a preventative against the infection, and also a mean of cure for such as were infected, with certification that all those who were pleased to accept and use his medicines, should be cured and made perfectly whole of that epidemical distemper, and such as would not apply, receive, and use his medicines were certain of death; and those whom he understood were incapable to undergo the means of cure, he immediately dismissed them from the army and service therein. Hence, is it not obvious, that all such whom he dismissed, upon the account of their weak constitutions, for fear of being smitten by the contagion of the plague, and might have died thereof, just as much obliged to the physician for their lives, as those who remained in the army, and were recovered by him. From whence it is evident, that the one was just, in every respect, as much indebted to the physician for their lives as the other. So, in like manner, it is most evident, that all such as are dismissed from life, by dying in infancy and childhood, are just as much indebted to Christ, who was the remedy provided for them, (if they had lived,) for their deliverance from sin, as those who were saved by the means of the physician.

And to conclude this section; with respect to the salvation of mankind, we see that Christ him-

self declares expressly, that he came not to call the righteous, but only sinners, to repentance. Now, children can never be said to repent, because they are altogether incapable of the knowledge of either good or evil; therefore cannot possibly be brought under sin, or the punishment that is due thereto. And if our Saviour's words be not sustained as valid, upon his own declaration, to whom shall we apply for a solution? For my part I know not. But whoever rejects what is expressed by Christ upon this head, it is our duty to reject their authority as vain, because to the dishonour of God.

S E C T. XXVII.

The difference made evident, whether Adam or his posterity was most subject to sin.

AGAIN, it may be observed, how that Adam was formed in both the strength of his reason and judgment, free of all manner of pollution, and never so much as exposed to the least degree of evil example, as his posterity were. And notwithstanding thereof, it is said, he, for all his boasted-of strength and purity, embraced the first temptation to which he was exposed, and thereby was involved in sin. But it fared altogether otherwise with his posterity, when little or nothing above mere animals, by reason of their infant-state, and that before they ever became ra-

tionals, are still exposed to many different bad examples, either in a more or less degree, before ever they can be aware or sensible of the evil thereof, by which vice being received, thro' temptation, becomes habitual before ever the rational powers begin to break forth. Hence, from these only ariseth the cause of man's corruption, which is taken, by these chevaliers, for what they call original sin.

To conclude this section; if the fruit of a tree, from its first formation, be made liable to corruption, would any person be so ignorant as vainly to imagine that the fruit that grew, or was produced from the fruit or seed of the said tree, that was formed liable to corruption by nature, should not be as subject to corruption as the said fruit from which it was produced? No, it is scarcely to be expected. In like manner, it would, in every respect, be as absurd to require infallibility of Adam's posterity, when he himself was made liable to fall, by the appointment of him who at first gave him a being. And as the said tree could not possibly produce or bring forth fruit, but what were subject to perishing; neither could Adam, who was made liable to fall, in his first formation, procreate or beget an infallible race of men; for, according as the various objects of temptation are multiplied, to which his posterity are commonly exposed, more than what he was himself, so will the degree of their

corruptions be increased, in a reciprocal manner, answerable to the multiplicity of their temptations, from whence they, (viz. these corruptions,) proceed. There being nothing that can be more evident, than what this must be, to every rational and unprejudiced mind, that is not yet become proof against, but is still lying open to the power of conviction; and who has not as yet sacrificed or given up his judgment to the ambition of an enthusiastic priest, by which it is, as it were, shut up in prison, as an evil doer, or hung and exposed in chains, like a state-criminal. This, though to be lamented, is too much the case with the greatest part of mankind, whose minds are only the slaves of priestcraft.

S E C T. XXVIII.

The weeping of children sustained as an infallible evidence for what they call original sin, but found false.

AGAIN, I shall mention another evidence, or what we may rather call an evasion, used by the chief patrons of this tenet, in proof of what they call original sin, upon which they lay very great stress, even the weeping and crying of children, after coming into the world, and is supposed by them as a sufficient proof in support of that doctrine; and this they confidently assert, that if Adam had not sinned,

children could never have wept, or shown the least degree of discontent; this alludes to whatever misfortune they might be exposed to. But, in answer thereto, weeping is a passion incident not only to human nature alone, but also to other different kinds of animals, and more especially man, because of the tender feeling of his nature, from his first coming into the world, till once he becomes rational: and as the rational powers begin to form and advance, this passion vanisheth more and more. And it is only by this passion, as animals, that he is capable to utter his wants, and express his complaints, when altogether incapable to declare them after any other manner.

This passion has been made an infallible proof by these advocates for what they call original sin. But if this evidence were to hold, it would prove too much, because original sin would vanish in degree as he grows up and becomes rational. By all which it is obvious, that, instead of proving their doctrine, they have only declared the absurdity and inconsistency thereof. And moreover, it is also evident, that there are no species of animals, who live in open air, whom he hath endued with voice, that, when young, but what utter their complaints when oppressed, or in straits, by this particular passion. But these originalists, like one when perishing, do vainly catch at shadows for want of the substance.

Further, it is to be observed, that according to

the greater degree of stupidity that animal life is possessed of, it still partakes of the less degree of this sensitive passion; for instance, see the most stupid kind of idiots, when born, they weep not, and are very rarely, if at all, seen to partake of this tender passion when in life. And as for children weeping, when born, it has always been sustained by sensible people, as a certain mark that they were possessed of their different senses. From which it is obvious, that weeping in children is no proof of original sin; for, if it were, idiots could inherit no portion thereof, and consequently could not be said to be of Adam's posterity. But such as are become manufactured idiots, by reason of priestcraft, and the prejudice of education, have, through the assistance of the devil, most presumptuously robbed human life of this sensitive passion, (which is the most feeling of all others.) Thus they dishonour God, by making him unjust, in punishing the innocent upon account of the guilty. For it is manifest, how that the greater degree animal life is possessed of this sensitive passion, it still becomes the more feeling under whatever pressure it is exposed to, in showing its distress, either in pain, in grief, or in want. For an infallible evidence thereof, witness dogs, who partake of a very high degree of this passion, even next to rationals; so that, either under grief, pain, or want, they express the same, by the feeling of this ten-

der passion which they are possessed with from God. Therefore, if weeping in children be an infallible proof of what they call original sin, it is an evidence, that whether dogs, or whatever kind of animals, according to the degree of which they are possessed with the tender feeling of this passion, (as by crying or weeping,) to express their present distress, under whether pain, grief, or want, must be guilty, and charged with Adam's sin, consequently must also be punished upon account thereof.

To conclude this section; it does sufficiently show the vanity of these fantastical dreams, which may be compared to spiders webs, or air bubbles, which are something in appearance, but nothing in substance.

S E C T. XXIX.

An assertion made in favours of this sin, that it is just with God to make creatures to-day, and damn them to-morrow, for no fault; but this found inconsistent with the nature of God.

THIS section is only a narrative, consisting of some of the different sentiments advanced by these originalists. As one of the votaries of this sin was affirming, how just it was for God to punish Adam's posterity upon the account of his transgression, said, that though God were to make ten thousand worlds to-day, and lay them under

damnation the next, for no manner of fault of their own, there would be no injustice done them. Now, what a shocking and wretched light was this, in which this originalist represented a just God? Would it be any thing else, than an act of a mere tyrant, to give being to creatures for no other purpose but to torment them? If a king were graciously pleased to grant a certain favour of riches amongst a number of his subjects, by way of loan, for whatever time he thought proper, and if he should again require it, it is nothing but what is just: but if he should take and employ the same, in purchasing instruments for to punish and torment these subjects innocently, could this be said to be any thing else but the act of a mere tyrant? No; most certainly it could not. So, in like manner, if God were to make ten thousand worlds to-day, and cut them off the next, he had done them no injustice; but to make ten thousand worlds the one day, and, though guilty of no fault, to punish and torment them the next, is positively an action that can by no means be ascribed to God. Hence we see, that this ignoramus, for the sake of gratifying his own perverse opinion, was pleased to rob and reduce God from an absolute infinite, to one only infinite in degree. For what is absolute power, exclusive of justice; and what is justice, exclusive of goodness, which is the principal perfection of God, to whom both the former two

attributes are subservient. For absolute power, exclusive of justice, goodness, and truth, is what only constitutes a mere tyrant; but is what can never be applied to the true God. Permit me the following digression: If a person, either by robbing or stealing of money, should make himself liable to condign punishment, and if he should be convicted of the crime, in doing injustice to him from whom it was taken, and, upon this conviction, returned the money to the owner, acknowledging his transgression, and imploring his pardon for the offence committed against him; upon which account the offended most generously and frankly forgave him. Hence it is obvious, that justice is more honoured and satisfied by this action, than that he had been detected by the owner, and the severity of the law executed against him. So, in like manner, when a sinner comes to be self-convicted of his iniquity, by turning from the same unto God, with full purpose and endeavour after new obedience, together with a sincere acknowledgment of his guilt, pleading the pardon and forgiveness of him whose laws he had transgressed; upon which account he thereby obtains mercy and forgiveness answerable to his request. Now, is not justice therefore more satisfied, honoured, and dignified, in virtue of this satisfaction, because the offender having thereby detected, accused, and condemned himself, in becoming his own

judge and jury, than that he should, by being inflexible, have continued obstinate to the end, and, in consequence thereof, had been detected, accused, judged, and condemned, and the whole of the law executed upon him at last? By which it appears, that in paying a proper respect to the first of these, he opened a door to mercy; whereas, in the second, justice was therefore executed against him, as right, by absolute power.

To conclude this section; in confirmation of the above, it is evident, that the cases are similar to what was established as a law in the Moisaical institutions, where it appears, that whoever should be guilty in transgressing this law, either by robbing, stealing, or deceiving, in making that their own, which was another's property; if they were self-convicted, and made complete restitution, in returning to the owners the full value wherein they had wronged them, acknowledging their fault, and begging their pardon, that they might forgive them, whereby they were only liable to return one fifth part more, for their transgression, in order to satisfy what damage the owners may have sustained upon the said account; but if they still remained incorrigible, and not convicted of their fault, by keeping concealed their fraud, till once discovered and detected by the owners, instead of being obliged to return the value, and a fifth part more, they were compelled to return five times

the sum or value of the whole. By this it is evident, that the law was infinitely more dignified by the former than the latter.

S E C T. XXX.

Whenever a law requires impossibilities, it ceaseth to be a law, and thereby looseth from the right of performance.

AGAIN, and to return, I shall hereby lay down another unerring evidence, against what they call original sin, in answer to this argument, that all mankind were made sinners, upon account of Adam's first transgression; which evidence, may be admitted a sufficient proof against both men and devils, and is as follows: Was not the children of Israel of Adam's posterity? I suppose there is none will refuse, or object against it. The case stands thus, that if Adam's posterity had been made sinners by his transgression, then would their right to life have been forfeited by law; and if their right of life was forfeited by law in Adam, upon what account would God have assured them of life, and confirmed their right thereto, by keeping the law. It is to be remarked, that the command, which is said to be delivered to Adam in paradise, and also to Israel at Mount Sinai, though they both have been set forth by men, under the name of a covenant of works, they were only appointed

them as a law to abstain from evil, and deter from vice, in order that they may be aware against iniquity. For there is not one work contained in either of these laws, but that of the fifth commandment, (if it may be supposed a work,) where it is said, thou shalt honour thy father, and thy mother, that thy days may be long, upon the land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee. Though this duty, like many others, proceeded from an internal obligation, it is said to have the reward of long life annexed thereto, for obedience; and what is to be understood by a covenant of works, means only the external services, which are contained in that of the ceremonial law. For the children of Israel, when God delivered the law unto them at Mount Sinai, had both life and death set before them, in every respect, as fully as Adam had set before him in paradise. And if their right to life had been forfeited by Adam, God, certainly, never would have assured them of life for keeping the law. But lest some should object, and say, that this only meant a temporal life, concerning their possessing the land of Canaan, that if they obeyed these different laws, they were to inherit the land; but if they transgressed these commandments, they were to be thrown out from thence. In answer to this, I shall not only show, but make it fully evident, that the keeping and obeying of these laws, consisted both of a spiri-

tual and temporal life. For instance, see Leviticus chap. fifth, verse fourth, down to the eighth verse of the sixth chap. where we see, that the sinner was to offer sacrifice, for different species of sins, both moral and ritual, and upon the account of which sacrifices, their offences and pollutions were to be forgiven and removed from them, and were no more to be had in remembrance against them. All of which being a sufficient proof, and solution, that that life promised them, upon condition of their obedience, in the observing these laws, consisted of both a spiritual and temporal nature. To set this in a more clear and proper light, I shall make the following observation, which is this: If an absolute sovereign, or legislature, should give and establish a certain code of laws, for the regulation of his different subjects, some of which laws, being hard enough to fulfil, yet if they be within the power of the subjects to perform, as they are subjects, they are certainly bound to obey them. But if he should issue out a law, upon pain of death, that was above the power of the subjects to fulfil, this would remain no longer a law, because the law is still meant to be founded on justice. But when a law is constituted contrary to justice, it remains no more a law, but a mere tyrannical act; for when justice ceaseth, in what is required, our duty to perform ceaseth also. For if the legislature had taken away the life of the subject, for not per-

forming an impossibility, his life, according to justice, stood in the same situation with the subject's disobeying, and not fulfilling that which was in his power to perform; by which means, according to justice, he would have forfeited and lost his right, as legislature, by law. The next thing to be observed, is what is said concerning this subject, in the Old and New Testament; see Leviticus, chap. eighteenth, verse fifth; Deuteronomy, chap. thirtieth, verses fifteen and nineteen; Galatians third, verse twelfth, besides many other scriptures, that I shall not mention at present. In all which scriptures, both life and death are still set before them, upon condition of their obedience, or disobedience to the law. Now, if it should be said, that ever there was, or shall be, what they call a law given by God, that was above the ability of the creature to fulfil, it is clear to a demonstration, that that law never came from God. For it is simply impossible, that such an act could either be given by, or come from God. For if there were a law given, that required what was above the power of the creature to perform, our obligation to fulfil comes to an end, and our obedience ceases to be a duty. For whatever act is issued out in the name of a law, which is above the ability of the creature to perform, its not fulfilling ceases to be a sin, and can never possibly be a transgression. For, whenever an impossibility to fulfil takes place,

transgression comes to an end. For to demand what is above the power of the creature to perform, cuts off the right of obedience, and loofeth from our obligation to fulfil.

Again, it is argued, that as man is God's property, he may dispose of him in whatever manner he will. This so far is right, for man is God's property. But although man is God's property, God giveth man a right of life, which he enjoys from him so long as he is pleased to continue him therein. And as that life is God's property, God may take away his life, and even annihilate him, if he will; in this, there is no injustice done. But to say, that God will dispense with, in taking away the life of the innocent, in way of punishment, or to require an impossibility, he can just as soon cease to be what he is. God, indeed, may dispense with his justice, so far, as in giving place to his goodness and mercy; but in the other, it is impossible. Now, I think it is clear to a demonstration, how much the simplicity of a credulous world hath been made a prey to, and imposed upon by such sophistry.

Again, a person may, through the transgression of a law, whether civil, moral, or divine, if within the power of the creature to perform, forfeit life, and become subject to an ignominious death, by the breach thereof; because punishment is the reward due, and ought to be in-

flicted, for the transgressing of the law, when founded on justice. But that the breach of a law, and punishment for the transgression thereof, should be executed against the innocent, in place or upon the account of the guilty, would be entirely inconsistent with the nature, justice, and rectitude of the Deity. And for us to ascribe to the Almighty, that he should require obedience above the power of his creatures to perform, or punish the innocent upon the account of the guilty, is positively one of the highest inconsistencies that can possibly be imputed to a just God. For I always thought that he had given authority to his prophets, to declare, in his name, saying, "Will not the God of all the earth do justly?" and it is most certain he will; for there is not the very least reason left for us to doubt or believe otherwise.

To conclude this section; it is most certain, that there is no legislature whatever, if possessed of the very least degree of justice, would give out a code of laws to his subjects, under the pain of death, to the transgressor or transgressors thereof, when he knew, assuredly, that none of them were able to fulfil them. For if a legislature was to prescribe a set of laws to his different subjects, when he was morally certain it would be impossible for them to perform the same, he could be nothing else than a mere tyrant; and therefore would, by no means, be a right or lawful sove-

reign. For if it had not been possible for man to keep the moral law, a just God had never enjoined him to the obedience thereof, by offering life and happiness in the keeping, and punishment upon the breach thereof. For if it had not been in man's power to resist sin, and abstain therefrom, is it possible that a just God would punish him for his iniquity? for it is only by having it in his power to obey, that he becomes punishable for not performing; for all God's ways are like unto himself, most holy, most-just, and most good.

By the above it is evident, that what they call original sin is nothing else than a mere frenzy, or the production of fantastical brains, because opposite to the nature of God, by striking at the very foundation of both his goodness and justice.

Lastly, I shall recite another visionary proof, used in favours of this tenet, which is, that if man had not been corrupted and depraved by virtue of Adam's first sin, there never had been given a law to man for the regulation of life. In answer to this cobweb evidence, of the law being a proof of man being depraved by virtue of Adam's first sin; if this should be sustained a proof of man's depravation, it would prove too much; because there is not one particle of law, (delivered to man,) that is of moral obligation, but what was given to Adam, and not only to

him alone, but also to his posterity, and engraven by God upon their hearts in their first formation. Now, if the law be admitted as a proof of man's depravation by nature, it is evident, from the above, that Adam's first sin proceeded, in every respect, as much from a depravation as those of his posterity: for there can be no probationary state without a law; for the word *probation* necessarily implies a law. If men had come into the world in an adult state, in ripeness of judgment, capable of exercising the rational powers, the same as Adam, the internal law of nature might have sufficed; but as they are only ushered thereunto, as mere animals, long before the rational powers begin to open, an external transcript thereof is no more than what was necessary. Having now shown the invalidity of this cobweb evidence, it must therefore vanish, and perish in course, along with the rest of all these other visionary hypotheses. Further, the rational powers being therefore not only subjected to dwell with the animal, by which they are led astray, (as observed elsewhere,) but as men were increased in number, so were the different causes or objects of their temptations multiplied; and the oftner these temptations were repeated, and complied with, virtue thereby was lost, and vice, through fashion, became less detestable; which sufficiently accounts for the increase of man's corruption, and wickedness upon earth.

S E C T. XXXI.

If there had been such a thing as original sin in a world, is it possible that our Saviour would have come, and not acquainted us thereof?

AGAIN, I shall lay down another proof against what they call original sin. If there had been such a thing as hereditary sin having had so much as a being, or the least foundation, as has been asserted by its different votaries, is it possible that such a thing could have existed, and our Saviour should have come into this our world, to declare the evil of sin, and yet never so much as once to have taken the least notice thereof? No, it is not possible. This is sufficient of itself to prove the falsehood, although there was not another to support it with. Hence it is evident, from John iii. 6. that our Saviour fully proves, and takes notice, that man consisted both of an animal and rational nature; for he saith expressly, that that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. From this it is evident, that the Saviour of the world never so much as made mention of the nature of any such sin. But these originalists will scarce so much as baptize one child, without haranguing on this their favourite theme, through which they most presumptuously pretend to be more knowing than our Saviour, whom God

sent from heaven, in order to teach and instruct us in things we knew not of.

Further, and to conclude this section; some have, in confirmation of this heresy, laid hold of what is expressed by our Saviour to Nicodemus, in the 3d verse of said chapter, that, "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Upon this they lay some particular stress, in proof that children are born under the pollution of sin. But, to show the vanity of what they infer from this text, see Matth. xviii. 3. where he saith, "Verily, I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Now, there is nothing can possibly be more manifest, than what we have from this text, that children need no conversion; and if children need no conversion, it is evident from this, that they are free of pollution; for our Saviour saith expressly, that except that we turn from our iniquities, and become (innocent or pure) as children, we cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

S E C T. XXXII.

Though man's corruption be supposed to be natural, it is found otherwise.

AGAIN, it is said, that there is a natural corruption in man, or that man's corruption proceeds from the nature of his being, by virtue of

Adam's sin. But the imputation is altogether false; for there is a living evidence, that man's corruption is only from himself, viz. both his reason and conscience, which still testify against evil, till once, through a continuance in sin, by repetition of vice, the rational powers come to be stifled thereby, and lulled asleep. But if man's corruption were natural, as asserted by these originalists, he would be dead to conviction from the very first motions towards evil; but this is what every human unprejudiced soul can testify against. For the first checks of conscience are still the smartest. Whereas, on the other hand, if vice were natural, there could be nothing at first more agreeable, and would cause no disturbance in the mind of man, which is an infallible evidence that sin is not an inherent quality, but ariseth from example and temptation to evil, and acquireth its strength only by degrees, in being reduced to practice; and as it increases in power, it confirms itself from custom and habit.

But such as are sticklers for this tenet will assure you, that they feel, from experience, that their natures are corrupted by reason of Adam's transgression; and also affirm, that if their minds were not corrupted thereby, they would always be spiritually employed without interruption. But, in answer thereto, is it possible that a compound being, consisting of both an animal and rational nature, can be always spiritual, when so

nearly related, and bound in connection with the animal? No, not possible; therefore the assertion is, in every degree, as inconsistent as to pour water and spirits into one vessel together, and yet require the spirits to be drawn off distinct from the water, without being extracted therefrom by force of fire. For it is most evident, that each thereof, whether of the animal or rational natures, have their different concerns and cares to attend upon.

Lastly, Is it possible, that any person, if possessed of his rational powers, can be so grossly ignorant, as not to know that Adam was created fallible; therefore, if the first man was made fallible, it would be nothing less than high presumption, and downright infidelity, either to imagine or require infallibility from his posterity.

S E C T. XXXIII.

A farther proof, that the rational powers remain as much uncorrupted by Adam, as the first moment they were given him by God.

AGAIN, I shall further point out another absurdity, advanced and held forth by these originalists, in order to screen themselves from the truth, whereby they do not only most vainly imagine, but will have the assurance to tell you, that man's rational powers, which were given

him by God, in his first formation, are not only corrupted by Adam's first sin, but are altogether lost, not only to himself, but also to his posterity. From which tenet they assert, that not only Adam, but also all his posterity, were rendered incapable, not only of doing good, in virtue of these rational powers, that were first given and received by them from God, but were also become a prey to sin, and thereby rendered incapable to resist evil. But in order to clear up the absurdity of this advancement, I shall essay, from what follows, to make it evident, that man's reason remains as entire, as it did in the very first moment he received it from God. Who is it that knows not, that man, when asleep, is as it were disarmed of his rational powers, and becomes as ungarded thereof, as if he had never been possessed of the same. And when this is the case, how often are the animal powers set a roving, by reason of the different objects that had been exposed before them through the past day.

Hence, when the rational powers come to be dispossessed of their activity, the mind becomes altogether unconscious of its actions, and being left in this state, it falls a prey to animal nature. So that, in some of these different dreams, (which are incident to various kinds of animals,) they will perform actions, sensible to the animal part, which if awake, would be condemned by their

own reason; and also would become a sin and ignominy, thereby exposing them to the world. How few of both males and females, who are come to years, but are fully sensible of the above? How many have performed such actions, when asleep, and unguarded by their rational powers, who never were so much as guilty thereof, thro' the whole course of their lives, when awake, and under the government of their reason? If it shall be said, that God restrains man from such actions while awake, is there not as much, or more necessity still, of God's restraining power, when asleep? Certainly there is. For if in the one, it be necessarily required, while awake, it must, of necessity, be more so when asleep, and altogether unaware of danger. Hence, does not this sufficiently expose the absurdity of our nature's being corrupted in Adam, and the powers of our reason not only weakened, but even altogether lost, either for doing good, or resisting evil. If this were the case, as is represented by these originalists, that our natures were corrupted, and our rational powers lost, from doing good, and resisting of evil, man would be just as incapable, when awake, and under the government of these powers, to resist evil, as when asleep. But there is no reasoning against facts; for what numbers of mankind have performed actions, through dreams, when asleep, which if they had performed the same, when awake, and

under the government of their reason, they would have condemned themselves, as guilty, upon the account thereof. Therefore it is clear, from the above, that the rational powers remain as entire, from the imputation of Adam's first sin being transmitted by generation to his posterity, as at the very first moment he, (to wit, Adam,) was endued therewith from God. I repeat it again, that the actions performed by animal nature, while from under the government of the rational powers, and the very same species of actions, not only condemned by, but even altogether perpetually abstained from, when under the government of the said powers, is a sufficient evidence against whatever assertions the agents of hell have advanced to the contrary. From this it is evident that these powers remain just as entire, in every degree, as they did the very first moment they came from God. And is it not manifest that the very first temptation offered to Adam, he rejected not, but embraced, and none of his posterity could have done worse. Only ask these originalists, if ever they resisted sin; and if they should answer, that they never rejected, but embraced every temptation, that came in their way, such behaved to be extremely wicked, by their taking hold of every temptation to evil. Again, if it should be alledged that they never embraced a temptation to evil; in answer to this, such have no reason to accuse

their first parents, of their nature's being corrupted in Adam, when they themselves have done better than he.

Hence it is evident from the above, that man's corruption is not natural, but proceedeth only from our complying with temptation, and evil example. For if vice only ariseth from the seeds of corruption, (as alledged by these originalists,) that lyeth latent in our natures, and descendeth to us by way of generation, and not from temptation and example, from what cause did Adam's first sin proceed? It would therefore appear from this tenet, that his sin arose from the seeds of corruption, that had remained latent in him, from his first formation, which would be absurd; because no impurity can possibly come from God. Now if Adam's first sin did not arise from the corruption of his nature, this gives an infallible evidence, that the sin of his posterity doth not proceed from a corruptness of disposition, conveyed to them, by generation, from Adam, but only from a continuation of the same causes of his sin, viz. temptation, and evil example.

To conclude this section; it is most strenuously asserted, by such as are the chief patrons for this ancient heresy, that man, in virtue of this supposed depravity and corruption, derived from Adam's first sin, is rendered altogether incapable to do the will of God. Upon which account

they affirm, that moral duties are unprofitable, and can merit nothing, in our acceptance with him, and upon this they proceed. Answerably thereto, how often have I heard whole sermons crammed with the above doctrine, and others of the like nature, to the dishonour of God, reducing all to believing, except a few instructions, issued out, in winding up the discourse, letting them know, that without holiness, in doing the will of God, to wit, these moral duties which he has required, they cannot possibly be saved. They first tell the people, that works, or moral duties, cannot save, or profit them, and then, at last, without which duties, they cannot see God. Thus far they act in conjunction with Roman Catholics, who make their deluded votaries believe, that by their works of ceremony, and dreeing penance, along with the absolution of their priests, this will secure heaven in their favours; till at last, in order to undeceive, and let them know, that these things cannot profit them, they tell them, that they must only rely upon the mercy of God, through Christ, for their salvation, and with that of extreme unction, they conclude. The other, though they have set aside works, or moral duties, as unprofitable, they tell them, at last, in place of their extreme unction, that without holiness, to wit, that of moral duties, they cannot possibly be saved; and thus they also conclude. By which it appears, in so doing,

that each thereof condemned, what they themselves formerly professed.

S E C T. XXXIV.

A short view concerning what reference is made betwixt Christ and Adam, respecting original sin.

AGAIN, as concerning this mistake, of what they call original sin, which hath made so much noise, and given place to such unwarrantable conceptions of the true God. The misunderstanding thereof may be said to have been the source of almost the whole confusion, which hath taken place in the Christian world; and with respect to what reference hath been made between Christ and Adam; that Adam was the first who sinned, and thereby sin made its way into the world, who by his disobedience many were made sinners, and by the obedience of one, (to wit, Christ,) many were made righteous. Now as Adam was the first that sinned, who, by breaking the law, may be said to have forfeited the favour of his God; and it may very justly be said, that by him sin entered into the world, not by way of generation, through his transgression, but only by evil example. For if a person should bring up one or more children, though not his own, and if he should breed up these children under whatever vice, such as the law

would take hold, and put them to death upon the account thereof, doth it not appear evident, that these children became partakers of their preceptor's sin; so that being educated therein, they became practisers of the same, for which they were put to death. Now did this sin, for which these persons died, descend to them, from their preceptor, by generation? Certainly not, that was impossible; for they only learned it from example, and by acquiescing therewith were punished, and put to death, upon account thereof. So, in like manner, though the first rise of sin took place in Adam, yet sin and corruption, by no means, descended from him to his posterity, by generation, as the effect of his transgression; but only from temptation and evil example; by which means, as observed, vice became habitual at last to his posterity. And again, as it is said, that by the obedience of one many were made righteous, meaneth only, that by virtue of these doctrines, which Christ brought with him from God unto our world, who not only taught and practised the same himself, for our example, but died in confirmation thereof, he having given up his life unto a most painful and ignominious death, as a testimony against the evil of sin, in proof of its just demerit, with the certain consequences of the different punishments due upon account thereof, that we by considering the same in a just and proper light,

might be delivered from the evil of sin, and the punishment due thereunto, by turning unto God, with a full purpose and endeavour after new obedience, by our persevering therein. This is all, as I apprehend, that is to be understood by the above reference, necessary to be taken notice of.

Again, before I conclude this section, I cannot but observe, how that to maintain this doctrine, of our nature's being corrupted in Adam, is no less than to charge God (who formed us in the womb,) with the highest degree of injustice. Therefore such a doctrine must be no less than highly injurious unto him. But in order to evade this imputation, they say that God withheld the communication of his divine Spirit, not only from Adam alone, upon the account of his first sin, but also from all his posterity; so that, by the withdrawing of these divine influences, man was thereby left to wander at random, after the corrupt imaginations of his own depraved heart, in that dejected, helpless, and forlorn state in which he now is. But in answer to this hypothesis, of Adam's posterity being not only depraved in their natures, but also left of God, upon the account of Adam's first transgression, I shall hereby make the following observation. Is there any difference to be found in the action betwixt the parent, that takes the child and sells it for a slave, or of a second parent, that takes the child,

and either gives it over to another, who he is certain will either make a slave thereof, or sell it for that purpose? Though there be a difference in the circumstance, the consequence is the same. This, of itself, is what may suffice to open up and set forth the nature of that fallacious doctrine, of our nature's being depraved, and left of God, by reason of Adam's first sin. Again, it may be objected, that to appoint Adam, as a federal head, or what they call a representative, for his posterity, and to have dealt with, or rewarded them as such, would have been a most unjustifiable action; to which they hereby object, and say, that it was better for Adam's posterity to be represented by him, than that every single individual had been appointed to stand personally for himself, considering what obligations he lay under, and depended upon his behaviour, in case he should have been tempted to fall. But in answer to this objection, whether would such a one be accounted a wise man, or a fool, that would risk or throw away his whole estate, I shall suppose, of ten thousand pounds a-year, and bankrupt not only himself alone, but all his posterity, for one chance, when ten thousand was not equivalent; would not such a one have been accounted not only a fool, but a mad man? Yea, a mad man, for certain. Similar thereto would have been the case with Adam, in representing his posterity, in their being rewarded according

to his behaviour; for whatever number of souls proceeded from him, and existed in his posterity, whose eternal interest depended upon their behaviour, as moral agents, so would they, according to justice, require the same number of chances in their behaviour as probationers before God. This again may suffice to unvail the nature of that fallacious doctrine of Adam's being a head or representative for his posterity; a doctrine indeed not only dishonourable to God, but obnoxious to every particular person, who hath been able to form any proper judgment or idea of the nature and rectitude of a true and just God.

S E C T. XXXV.

An assertion made by the advocates of this tenet, that Adam represented his posterity; and, in answer thereto, it is made evident in what respect he did so.

AGAIN, in connection with the former, I shall point out another subterfuge used by these originalists, in order to secure and screen themselves from seeing the truth, least they should be convinced of their mistake, and return to their duty, as becometh rational creatures, endued with a proper knowledge of the true God. Thus they confidently assert, that God appointed Adam as a representative, or what they call a federal head,

for all his posterity, and that the whole of their fate depended upon his obedience, or disobedience, who also were inevitably to be rewarded, according to his actions, whether they were good or bad; and this they hold as infallible, without so much as either authority from God, or respect to his justice, his goodness, or truth. As to Adam's representing his posterity, is right, so far only as he walked agreeable to the will of God, and they acting suitable to the same, were to be rewarded answerable thereto. And if he did not walk agreeable to the will of God, they, acting after his example, were to be punished according to the demerit thereof. And thus, by Adam's actions, and his posterity taking him for their example, whether in good or in evil, he so far became their representative, but no farther. For there is no doubt, but that the same rules laid down to Adam, were certainly to descend to his posterity, concerning their obedience or disobedience, with whatever rewards or demerit were due upon the account thereof, whether of good or evil, according to the rules of justice and truth. And if this is refused by these originalists, I would only ask them the following queries, which are these:

Q. 1st. Whether the souls of Adam's posterity received their beings from Adam, as one taper is lighted by another? Q. 2d. If they are only created at the time of life? Q. 3d. Or, if they

were all created at once, and received their beings along with him? If it shall be said, that they descended from Adam, as one taper is lighted at another, in what a light is this to represent God, as committing over to eternal damnation millions of souls, who were neither there by vote or proxy, whose fate were to be determined by the action of one single person, whom he knew assuredly, before ever he gave him a being, would as certainly fall, as he does this present moment. Or if it should be said, that they were only created at the time of life; this is making no addition to the former action, but is rather making it worse, because it is only creating souls on purpose to give them over to another, in order to bring about their damnation.

Again, if it should be said, that they were all created at once; this makes the case no better, but much worse; except they can prove that the souls of all mankind were personally present to consent to the agreement, or gave Adam a power to contract for them; which proof, I apprehend, can never possibly be produced. However, I shall say no more at present upon this head, but shall patiently wait their solution of the above queries; and, if answered properly, without delay, I submit; but if they cannot solve the above, my argument must still remain, as being a sufficient proof against such an hypothesis: whereby it evidently demonstrates the

whole thereof to be nothing more than a mere deceitful chimera of their own invention, without the very least authority from God.

Lastly, to conclude this section; I cannot but observe how that some of the chief patrons of this tenet, when every other refuge is like to vanish in speaking to its advantage, they alledge, that it hath a necessary tendency to keep mankind humble. A most woful humility indeed, that depends upon the dishonour of God for its foundation, and obtained at no less expence than the sacrificing of his justice for the support thereof: and however light men may look upon it, this really is the case. Now whatever advantages may sophistically be ascribed to such an humility, it is not only dishonourable to God, but unprofitable to men; for there is all the difference in the world betwixt one who is already defiled, and another whose garments are clean; for the one knows that whatever filthiness may befall him, he can never be worse; but the other, by reason of his purity or cleanness of dress, is still afraid of being defiled. From this it is evident, what an infinite difference there is, in making children believe that they are already become loathsome, through the defilement of sin, from their first parents, or to tell them they are pure, in order that they may be aware against the pollution of vice.

S E C T. XXXVI.

A further proof that the corruption of our natures ariseth from no inherent cause, as shown under the similitude of a male and female.

AGAIN, as a further evidence that there is no corruption of our natures from our first parents, but only from evil example. For instance, I have read of a male and a female, in order that they might not be corrupted by bad example, were shut up from world, under the care and protection of a modest nurse, who made them sleep together, from an infant state, until they arrived at the period of mature life, when the passions become strongest, or at their greatest vigour. And for all this, natural passion being superior to all others, there was not the least degree of the one being perverted by the other. From this we may very easily see, whatever is acquired by custom, and brought into habit, through the power of example, commonly remains with us to latest years, whether it be good or evil. But there is no general rule without exceptions. And for a further proof of the above, it is said by Solomon, (as observed elsewhere,) that if you shall train up a child, when he is young, in the way that he should go, that when he is old, he will seldom be found to depart from it. The above is commonly the case, whether consisting of good or evil; the contrary very rarely coming to pass, either to the right or

left, except arising from strong temptation, encouragement, or example. And to conclude this section; it is evident, from the foresaid, how we come to be corrupted in our natures, not from any inherent cause, conveyed to us by Adam, in the way of generation, as hath been vainly asserted by these originalists; but only from the power of temptation, habit, and evil example.

S E C T. XXXVII.

No immaterial quality can possibly be conveyed to posterity, except it has first been given thereto by God.

AGAIN, as there are some singular troubles, which cleave fast to the human body, in some different families, or particular persons; and as these troubles are sometimes conveyed, by way of generation, to their posterity, it is sustained, by these originalists, as an infallible proof of what they call original sin being conveyed by Adam, in way of ordinary generation, to his posterity. It must be acknowledged, that whatever consisteth of matter, and ariseth from the nature of the animal body, may indeed be conveyed, by way of generation, to their posterity; the reason being this, because it can no longer exist, but of necessity must perish along with that material substance. But sin or guilt, which consisteth not of matter, but is only a moral evil, or quality,

arising from the not making a proper use, but an abuse, of these rational powers and passions, received by us from God, can never, therefore, possibly be procreated, nor conveyed by generation to posterity; the reason being this, because it is of an immaterial nature, and perisheth not with the body, but existeth after the dissolution thereof. Thus, I do acknowledge, it is possible that such as a weak and sickly constitution, with different other infirmities of the body, which ariseth from matter, and material causes, may be conveyed by natural generation to posterity. But sin, which is not a creature, but only an act of the creature, and is more metaphysical than the spirit itself, because it depends upon created spirit for its being, and not upon God, therefore is altogether impossible to be procreated, and conveyed to posterity by natural generation. For both body and spirit can exist without sin; but it is altogether simply impossible that sin can exist independent of spirit. Therefore, as sin hath not its origin from the first cause, it is impossible that it can be conveyed to posterity by the established laws of nature, or qualities appointed by God. If there were such a thing possible, as that evil qualities, that were neither given by, nor received from God, could be procreated and conveyed, by way of generation, to posterity; how much more possible should good qualities, that are given to us by God, such as goodness, be

procreated, and conveyed by generation to posterity. If the one that comes from God, cannot possibly be procreated, and conveyed by way of generation, to posterity; far less can such qualities, as never came from God, but only from the devil, be procreated, and conveyed by generation to their children: The reason why, because each of these different qualities being only the good or bad effect, arising from an improvement, or misimprovement, of these original powers or talents, that we at first received from God. Upon which account sin, as being only an evil quality, arising from the misimprovement of the rational powers, cannot possibly be propagated and transmitted to another by generation. And to assert, that sin, which is not a creature of God, but only an act of moral evil, produced by the creature, can be conveyed to posterity, by ordinary generation, is just as much as to say, that man, as a creature, was capable to add to the complete creation of God. For sin committed by the creature, makes no addition to creation; therefore, because not appointed by God, it is altogether impossible that it can be procreated, or conveyed by generation to posterity; for amongst all the different species of creatures that he hath made, even from man, down to the lowest insect, it is altogether impossible that they could either add to, or diminish from the nature of these qualities that

were originally given, and received by them from God, in their first formation, or convey the same, by generation, to their posterity. From this it is evident, that sin can, by no means, descend to posterity, by way of generation, but only by evil example, as hath been observed in the above.

Now, methinks, by detecting the fraud, I just at present hear some of the chief patrons for this ancient heresy exclaiming, with rage, against this performance, for the attack made upon a doctrine, which hath been of more than 1400 years standing. But in answer to this reflection, Does this give a right to the devil, who has been propagating heresies for the space of 5000 years and upwards, not to be attacked for his vices, nor resisted, because of ancient date? a doctrine, indeed, too much resembling the professors thereof.

S E C T. XXXVIII.

An argument used by the votaries of this tenet, that the children of sinful parents cannot be free from sin, therefore will be punished by God upon account thereof; but what will such not make him perform for the sake of their own perverse desires.

AGAIN, it may be objected, and said, how can Adam's posterity be free from sin, who are the children and offspring of sinful parents? In an-

swer to this, if Adam's posterity could have received their beings from Adam, independent of God, this objection might be admitted as just. But the case is altogether otherwise, as we see in the one hundred and second Psalm, verse eighteenth, where it is said, "This shall be written for the generation to come, and the people that shall be created shall praise the Lord." From this I would ask these originalists, by what means those souls, that were to be created, should come to be punished for Adam's sin, since they only came into being by a future creation? If this was the case, how came they to be accountable for Adam's transgression? If those souls were only an after-creation, how will they make it appear, that Adam's sin descended to them by ordinary generation? But what need I mention this; for those who can make God punish brutes, for Adam's sin, who had no connection with him by generation, can as much make God punish souls, of a future creation, whom they cannot prove to have descended from him by generation. For there is no bounds left to such as will neither be subjected to, nor limited by, the rectitude of the just and true God, but only by the perverse imaginations, and wild chimeras, of their own fantastical brains.

To conclude this section; there is no person can possibly admit and receive such doctrines, or opinions, as would tend to represent God in-

consistent with himself, but only they, who, from a weakness, or want of judgment, know no better; and these too, are like those, who have got small weights, or short measures, condemning, as unlawful, whatever are superior thereto, or exceedeth the bounds of their contracted ideas; who also confidently imagine, that their ignorance should become an infallible standard for the highest degrees of sublime knowledge.

S E C T. XXXIX.

An evidence that no moral evil can be conveyed by way of generation to posterity.

AGAIN, as it has been already observed in a former section, that sin, which is a moral evil, can never possibly be transmitted to posterity, either by procreation, or generation, because that sin is not a creature of God, but only an act produced by the creature, independent of him; therefore must be opposite to his will and authority.

Thus, it is simply impossible that ever sin, as a moral evil, can be conveyed, by the established laws of nature, which God hath appointed, and unalterably fixed, to the creature; because this would be an act above the power of all the creatures of God, either to add to, or diminish from, an established law, given to nature by him. For it would be most preposterous to imagine, that an

act of sin, which is diametrically opposite to the very nature of God, can possibly be conveyed, in way of generation, by any of the established laws that he hath appointed to nature. For if such a thing were possible, for sin to be procreated by man, and conveyed by generation to his children, if this were the case, the whole load of sin that was committed by their progenitors, would have been transmitted down from the first man, and also charged upon, and borne by, the last persons of his posterity; which would have been enough to have made them shrink under the intolerable burden thereof. Again, if there were such a thing as original sin in a world, as if when a person's sins are forgiven, this would certainly include its original guilt, as well as its actual transgressions. Therefore if such a thing were to be admitted, as that sin could be procreated, is it possible that the person could procreate, and convey to posterity, that of which it was not possessed? Certainly not. For no sin can possibly remain, after the guilt is removed. Now, therefore, it is most evident from the above, that whatever children were begot by the said person, after the guilt was removed, could such children ever be accountable for Adam's transgression? Not possible. For if they were to be punished, upon the account thereof, it would be nothing less than making two charges for one debt; for when once the debt is forgiven,

it can never possibly, according to justice, be charged a second time, without the renewing the like action, whereby the debt was contracted.

Before I conclude this section, it will not be amiss to take notice of another argument used by these originalists, in favours of this tenet, it being upon what they lay some particular stresses. For instance, take a certain quantity of the finest liquor, and if once adulterate it, by mixing therewith liquid of a base or different quality, it is not in the power of the chemist to rectify and restore it to its original purity; because, that when extracted, it could be nothing more than a composition drawn from off these different liquors; and from this they infer, that when Adam came to be defiled by sin, it was simply impossible to restore his posterity from the pollution thereof, to that former purity he at first possessed. But in answer thereto, as for the composition of the liquor, or spirit extracted therefrom; as the different substances thereof, being originally from God, each quality behoved to bear its part in the compound; but as for sin, it being a quality which was never given by God, nor depends upon him for its existence, the composition thereof cannot possibly be conveyed into posterity, but only from temptation, and evil example. For as sin hath not its origin from the author of nature, therefore it can never possibly be conveyed to another by the established

laws thereof; but only as from the foresaid, viz. temptation and example. For it is simply impossible that any thing can exceed the laws of nature, which are appointed thereto of God, but only that which is preternatural; and if there was such a thing possible as that sin could be procreated, every particular procreation of the human species would infallibly become a preternatural act, because it exceeded nature in the bounds set thereto by God.

S E C T XL.

Some queries set forth, with answers thereto, in order to prove that there is no original sin can possibly exist in a world amongst men.

AGAIN, I shall lay down some different queries, with answers thereto, in order to shew the absurdity, and prove the inconsistency, of what they call original sin.

Query 1. What was the cause of Adam being so much accused by his posterity?

Answer. The cause thereof was sin.

Q. 2. Why do they accuse Adam for sin?

A. Only because they imagine he was the first that brought sin into the world, upon the account of whose offence, they say that all his posterity were laid under damnation.

Q. 3. Is there such a thing possible, that A-

dam's sin can descend to his posterity, and they be punished for his iniquity?

A. Not by way of generation, but only from example. Nor yet punished, according to justice, but for their own personal guilt.

Q. 4. What is it that makes sin?

A. The not using aright, but abusing, these rational powers, with the different passions, we at first received from God, for our good, is that which constitutes sin.

Q. 5. Is sin a creature?

A. No.

Q. 6. What then is sin?

A. Sin is only an evil quality, arising from the abuse of these powers, that we at first received from God.

Q. 7. Is sin an inherent quality?

A. No, the first cause of sin only ariseth from the powers of animal nature, prevailing upon the rational to comply therewith.

Q. 8. Is it possible that any inherent qualities can exist in animal nature, than what were at first given thereto by God?

A. No, not possible; material qualities may; but that which is immaterial never possibly can.

Q. 9. Is there any quality can possibly exist, exclusive of nature?

A. Yes.

Q. 10. What is that quality?

A. Sin.

Q. 11. Is sin a quality?

A. Yes.

Q. 12. What is the nature of that quality?

A. The nature thereof is evil.

Q. 13. From whence is the first origin of evil?

A. Not from God, because he is infinitely good, there is no evil can possibly proceed from him.

Q. 14. From whence then is the origin of evil?

A. The origin of evil is from the devil.

Q. 15. By what means became he a devil?

A. Only by apostatizing from good, and making choice of evil.

Q. 16. Is it possible that sin, as being an evil quality, can be procreated and conveyed by generation?

A. No, not possible.

Q. 17. For what reason may not sin, since it is a quality, be procreated?

A. The reason why sin cannot be procreated is this, because it is an evil quality, and there is no evil quality can possibly come from God; and if sin be not a quality given by God, it can, by no means, be produced by generation; for no qualities can possibly be procreated, but what only come from God. For an infallible evidence thereof, see the whole animal creation, when accumulated together, they have never as yet, for near the space of six thousand years, been ca-

pable to procreate so much as one single additional quality, to those which they at first received from God, in their first formation, nor yet to diminish therefrom.

Q. 18. Was sin decreed by God?

A. No. For if evil were decreed by God, it could by no means have been a sin, for God decrees nothing that is contrary, but only what is agreeable, to his will; and what is performed in obedience to the will of God, is a duty, and whatever is a duty, can by no means be a sin.

Q. 19. If sin be not decreed, nor comes from God, by what means did the evil of sin take place?

A. Not by decree, but only by permission.

Q. 20. If sin, which is an evil quality, be not given by God, from whence does it proceed?

A. Sin, which is of an evil quality, is commonly transferred by example, and sometimes it ariseth from temptation; so that when once the mind comes to be corrupted thereby, sin is then produced by men, from animal nature, in opposition to the rational, and by the rational powers complying therewith, is that which constitutes sin.

Q. 21. If it were possible to procreate qualities, such as were neither given, nor received from God, what would be the consequence thereof?

A. The consequence would be this, that evil qualities, in bad men, by reason of the daily in-

crease of wickedness added thereto, in each of their lives, one after another, so that in a course of some different generations, they would not only procreate bad men, such as evil angels, but they would even degenerate into devils at last. And also by the improvement of virtue, in the lives of good men, one generation after another, so that in the course of some generations, they would not only procreate holy men, such as good angels, but would even arrive to that degree as to become gods at last. But there is an unalterable law established in nature, by God, against all such disorders, so that no creature's existence can possibly exceed what it at first received from him. And if this were not the case, nature, by being left to act at random, under such an irregularity, would soon altogether run into disorder, and become a mere chaos of confusion at last.

Q. 22. Since this is the case, that sin cannot possibly be procreated, nor conveyed by generation to posterity, from whence then hath sin its origin?

A. Only from temptation and example; and by the rational powers complying therewith, sin takes place, and thereby proceeds into action.

Q. 23. Since temptation is the first cause of evil, might not God have prevented sin, by removing the temptation, it being the cause thereof, and thereby would have prevented his crea-

tures from being ensnared, and becoming a prey thereto?

A. If God should have so determined to prevent sin, by removing the temptation, as being the cause thereof, in order to secure his creatures from being ensnared thereby; if this should have been the case, there could have been no probationary state, and in consequence thereof, no future rewards. This would be no less than striking at the root, in overturning all true religion.

Q. 24. Therefore, since this be the case, as in query twenty-first, is it possible that either Adam, or any of his posterity, could even procreate so much as one single additional quality, more than what was given, and they themselves had already received, from God, in their first formation, as to convey it, by way of ordinary generation, to their progeny?

A. No, not possible. And if it shall be supposed possible, then man remains no longer a creature; for, by this action, he becomes a creator, by reason of his giving being to a quality, by procreation, that he himself never received from God. And if not possible that he can procreate, or give no additional quality, nor convey it, by way of ordinary generation, to his posterity; then no original sin can possibly exist in a world amongst men; for the cause can never possibly proceed from the effect, but the ef-

fect from the cause, viz. temptation and evil example.

Again, it being the case, that the different sticklers for this heresy make Adam's first sin the original source of all the other evils that take place in the world, in order to evade the truth, viz. that temptation and evil example have been the continued cause thereof; upon which account I shall lay down the nine following queries, with answers thereto.

Q. 25. Was the temptation made to the woman, to break the commandment, in eating the forbidden fruit, and Adam's taking her for his example, immediately removed out of the world, at his falling in and complying therewith?

A. If they can fully prove, that this was the case, viz. that temptation and example were immediately removed out of the world, at his falling in and complying therewith; then they may very justly make Adam's sin the source of their iniquities. But if they cannot prove that this was the case, (it being impossible, upon account of the numberless and daily instances of both, which are still taking place to the contrary,) how then dare they have the confidence (or I may say the assurance) to make Adam's offence the cause, in excusing themselves, saying, that all their sins are no more than only the consequence of Adam's first transgression? A most palpable deceit, and woful evasion indeed, which has always been

the case with us, in rolling the occasion of our own faults (like as Adam did his upon his Maker) over upon another. Thus, by excusing ourselves, it becomes a greater aggravation of our guilt, which is the very same case with these originalists, in accusing Adam for their iniquities. In the first place, Adam, in order to excuse himself, accuses God, saying, the woman which thou gavest me, gave me of the fruit of the tree, and I did eat; and we, from Adam's example, in order to excuse ourselves, have most falsely accused Adam of our nature's being corrupted in him, by virtue of his transgression. Now, what is all this, but a most bare-faced excuse, and a hellish evasion in both; for Adam accused his first parent, viz. God, for his fault, and we accuse Adam, as our first parent, for our faults; each of which excuses is no less than a striking at the very essence of the Deity.

Q. 26. As the woman was the first that sinned, is it possible that any thing can be more evident, than that Adam's sin arose from the temptation made by the woman, and also by him taking her for his example?

A. No, nothing more evident.

Q. 27. Since that Adam was entirely innocent, pure, and free of sin, and yet complied with the first temptation and example, by what means can we suppose that his posterity should be more capable to resist temptation, who are

still subject to the pressure thereof from evil example?

A. There is nothing could be more ridiculous than for us to expect or require it: for the first yielding to sin, by the woman, was only from temptation; but we, like Adam, are under both temptation and evil example, from our youth up, when altogether incapable to discern betwixt either good or evil, till once accustomed thereto. Therefore it would be highly absurd to imagine that a being, who was only procreated, should be stronger than it from whom it proceeded, whose being, viz. Adam's, was originally from his Maker, independent of procreation; or that the fruit or seed of the tree should be stronger than the tree itself, whereon the fruit grew by which it was produced. This fully decyphers that false accusation brought against Adam and his posterity, for what they call original sin.

Q. 28. If God had cut off Adam, in way of punishment, for his transgression, would not this have become a punishment to his posterity?

A. Although this had been the case, that God had cut off Adam, in way of punishment, for his transgression, it could have been no kind of punishment or loss to his posterity, because they never were so much as brought into being: for it is simply impossible, that a non-existence can either suffer loss, or come under punishment.

Q. 29. Is it possible that any thing can exist after it is annihilated?

A. No.

Q. 30. Is not the pardon of sin the annihilation thereof?

A. Yes.

Q. 31. Can sin exist after it is pardoned?

A. No; as is evident from the two former queries, and answers annexed thereto.

Q. 32. Can any person prove, that Adam's sin was not pardoned before he begot one or more of his children?

A. No.

Now, from queries 29th and 30th, and answers thereto, if we should suppose it possible for sin to be procreated, could Adam procreate and convey, by generation, to posterity that which was annihilated? No; not possible.

Q. 33. Does not the pardon of sin remove the guilt, and absolve from the punishment that is due thereto?

A. Yes; most certainly it does.

Now, if this was the case, that the guilt of Adam's sin was removed from him before he begat his children, then it is not possible that his posterity could partake of any part, either of the guilt or punishment that was due thereto. Now, therefore, if the guilt of sin has been removed from the parent before he begat his children, his posterity could no more partake of the guilt of

that sin, or the punishment that was due thereto, more than they had been begot a thousand years before the sin was committed. And besides all this, in what a light does it represent God, as not only to charge with the offence, but to punish the children for the guilt of a sin committed by the parent, which, I apprehend, cannot be refused, was both pardoned, and he absolved from the punishment thereof, before they were so much as begot by him. This would be no less than to charge the children with a debt for which the parent had received an ample discharge; and not only this, but also to shut up the children in prison, in virtue of the said debt, till the whole of the said sum should be paid. This is a doctrine, (though much in vogue,) can never be supposed possible for justice, although canonized by the patrons of what they call original sin.

Q. 34. Is it possible that any inherent qualities can be lost?

A. Yes. To ourselves they may, but to our posterity they cannot: for there is no inherent quality, such as either taste, smell, seeing, hearing, or the like, though lost in or by the parents, but what will be entirely complete in the children, or posterity procreated by the said parents; the contrary never coming to pass, except in that which is preternatural. From this it is evident, that though Adam forfeited his innocence, it could by no means deprive his children, or posterity,

of that original purity in which he himself was created. Now, since it has pleased God to establish such an irresistible barrier, in animal nature, against the loss or injurement of posterity, is it possible, that a just God would admit the rational powers, (which are, as it were, lighted by the divine Spirit,) to be corrupted by Adam, to the indispensable subversion of his posterity; and also to commit them over to eternal perdition, for no fault of theirs, but only for Adam's own personal guilt? Not possible, though most falsely and impiously represented as such, by men of corrupt minds.

Reader, mark what follows. However incapable we, as creatures, are to comprehend, and understand the ways of God, one thing we may infallibly be assured of, that there is nothing can possibly come from, or be required of us by God, but that which is conformable to his nature, and of a piece with himself.

S E C T. XLI.

A further proof against the doctrine of original sin being conveyed to posterity by generation.

AGAIN, it is morally certain, that amongst all the different species or tribes of animals, which are contained in the whole creation of God, whether of beasts, fowls, or fishes, to whom he hath given an existence, that amongst all these diffe-

rent species, there are not so much as two of one genus, who, by copulation, can either add or diminish, so as to propagate and convey, by way of generation, to their posterity so much as the most minute quality. And yet it is obvious, that the propagators of this arch-heresy, which is nothing less than a blaspheming the very God of heaven, in setting him forth in such a light as would make him guilty of the highest species of injustice, such as the punishing one person for the transgression of another, to wit, the innocent upon account of the guilty, an infant for the sin of an adult. Yea they have also assigned to man an additional quality, which he never received from God, I mean the investing him with creative power, such as the propagating of children, with a singular quality, which was neither given, nor received by him from God. And this they affirm, with as much confidence, as they do all the other qualities he hath received, and is possessed of besides. But the affirmation is just as false, as to assert, that he gave himself a being, independent of God. For it is altogether simply impossible, that either man, or any other creature, can transmit so much as one immaterial quality to their posterity, by way of generation, than what they have already positively received from God. There is no doubt, but man both learns and acquires either good or bad habits by practice, and at last becomes accustomed thereto;

and this is not only incident to man alone, but also to different species of brutes. But that they should be able to transmit them to posterity, by way of generation, is a thing altogether impossible. For it is morally certain, that as sin comes not from God, but being only an act of the creature, it is simply impossible, by the laws of nature, that it can be conveyed, by generation, to posterity, but only from temptation, and evil example, by their complying, receiving, and acquiescing with the same, which had been committed by others, in sinning against God. From whence we see the power of example, brought in by a prepossession got thro' the prejudice of education, in our childhood and youth, which grows up with us, and becomes almost irresistible in riper years.

For the better understanding of this superstitious tenet, I shall rehearse a short narrative, in way of illustration, concerning a Hottentot, who some time ago was brought over to London, from off the Cape of Good Hope, the inhabitants whereof, from custom, appear almost as far below human nature, as if they were a different species of beings, both in respect to their dress and way of life. One day, this Hottentot, being to appear before the royal family, was ordered to dress himself in a most gay and elegant manner: He apprehended no other dress was equal to that of his own country, which dress is only made up of the nasty entrails of beasts, which they

wreath about them, bedaubing themselves with the filthiness thereof, and this serves with such as rich ornaments. This Hottentot, arraying himself therewith, came forth, decked in his gaudy attire, whose appearance, to his loss, by reason of his dress, was no less than an abomination to the whole spectators. So, in like manner, it fares very much the same with such as are bred up, from their childhood, or youth, under this arch-heresy. For they no less than vainly imagine, that heaven itself would be shut against them, if they were not dressed up in the pollution of this sin. So that when they come to address their Maker, they actually believe, like the Hottentot, that they cannot be accepted, without appearing under this loathsome garb. Upon which account, in their supplications, they acknowledge, that they are conceived, and brought forth, in the pollution of original sin, by generation from Adam; and that the whole of their actual transgressions only proceeds therefrom; and by making his sin the cause, they also apologize, and thereby burden the same with all their different offences; which acknowledgment is no less than a piece of the highest indignity, and greatest dishonour, that can possibly be done to God, because it makes him unjust, by falsely ascribing to him the punishing the innocent, upon account of the guilty. This, like all the rest of their superstitious tenets, is a most gross and

shocking theology indeed; but is no more than what is sufficiently suitable to such as are the favourite votaries thereof.

Again, in regard to the Hottentot; they attempted to deliver him from his nastiness, both with respect to his dress, and manner of life; but the same being so interwoven with his constitution, it was like death itself to strip him thereof. Upon which account, as he could not possibly be bred otherwise, or delivered therefrom, they favoured him with a return to his own country. So, in like manner, such as are bred up under this doctrine, though diametrically opposite to the very rectitude and nature of the true God, they will dread nothing more than the damnation of hell, if they were to depart from it. This is generally the case with all such as are ensnared, and fall a prey to the doctrines and commandments of men, whose votaries are the alone support thereof. But it is certain, that whatever bears the image, with its proper qualities, that belongs to God, must come from him, and will be always sufficient to support itself. But whenever you come to attack the doctrines, traditions, and hypotheses, of fallible men, they run wild, because they have nothing more than their own authority for their support. Hence, see how the words of our Lord are here verified, when he says, they will strain at a gnat, but are never at a loss to swallow down camels. Yea, they will

even start back, and cry out hideously against sermons, in which is contained the essence of Christ's sermon on the mount, being the will of God delivered for the good and salvation of men; but they will not so much as hesitate to swallow down, like oil, the doctrines, traditions, and nostrums of fallible men, though ever so gross, and even altogether inconsistent with the nature and perfections of the Deity. This is too often the case, as in the above. But let God be true, though every man should become a liar.

To conclude this section; though there is not one syllable to be found, from the beginning of Genesis to the end of the Revelation, that excludes strict, or sound morality, (such as Christ's sermon on the mount, and others of like nature) from the favour of God, but is always distinguished by the highest marks of his approbation; yet, such as are warm advocates for these fantastical doctrines, invented to the dishonour of God, in the dark and dreary cells of visionary monks, cry out, and proclaim aloud, without the least authority from him, that such teachers are only leading men down to the chambers of death, or in the straight path to hell, while they themselves are the very persons in which light they have represented others. In this the old proverb is verified, saying, that there is none readier to cry out, for to hold the thief, than the thief. One thing still remains, which

is this; there cannot possibly be a more infallible mark of either persons or people being deeply indrenched in error, than that of usurping God's authority, in sending to hell, contrary to his commandment, every other sect or party, (however strict in their morals, and unblameable in their lives and characters,) that hold sentiments different from themselves. This only proceeds from a blind zeal, possessed by such as know not God, who do not only despise, but also set at nought, that which is altogether inseparable from the very nature of his existence.

S E C T. XLII.

A short account of that fallacious doctrine held forth in reducing the whole race of mankind from a state of freedom, to a state of bondage.

AGAIN, as concerning this doctrine of original sin, which is nothing more than a mere deceit, and invention of men, contrived by the devil, in order to rob such, (who are made free agents,) of that state of freedom wherewith they are possessed of from God. To illustrate this; if such as are entrusted, by permission of the legislature, with the laws and government of this realm, and if such should falsely and deceitfully come to pervert these laws and government, in the name of his Majesty, in subjecting all his free subjects into bondage and slavery, without

his authority—In what a light would such appear, or what punishment will be due, or sufficient for their reward? I answer, be the punishment what will, that all such as have taken upon them, in the name of God, without his authority, to reduce the whole race of mankind from a state of freedom, to a state of bondage and slavery, for no fault of their own, but only for a transgression committed by another, thousands of years before they ever so much as had an existence, which sin, they could, by no means, either foresee or prevent; therefore, from this it is obvious, that the latter is incomparably more culpable than the former; because they pervert the justice and goodness of the true God, by ascribing to him such gross impiety, even no less than punishing the innocent upon account of the guilty. Such a doctrine, without blasphemy, cannot possibly be imputed to God; though (it is to be lamented,) too often taught, and stands in very high esteem, with a credulous world, even to this present day.

But we see, that such as patronize doctrines inconsistent with the nature of the Deity, who, in order that the same may be received as divine, do not only teach, but also threaten with inevitable damnation, every one that will not receive them. But I shall leave the candid reader to judge, whether that such as model out the articles of their religion agreeable to the nature of God,

or such as propagate and hold doctrines inconsistent therewith, have most reason to be afraid, and dread the damnation of hell; they who conform their religion, in vindication of that divine harmony, which subsists amongst the different perfections of the Deity; or they who propagate and patronize doctrines, which make each of these perfections disagree with another. Christian, this is a doctrine, however light thou mayest look upon it, yea, whether thou believe it or not, it is a matter of the highest consequence to be determined betwixt thee and thy God, who will undoubtedly be thy impartial judge at last; for he alone is most holy, most just, and most good. But if he was such a one as to punish the innocent, upon account of the guilty; and required more of his creatures than what they were capable to perform, he could neither possibly be holy, just, nor good. For this reason I would advise people, upon the penalty of incurring the displeasure of God, to avoid all such profane doctrines, opinions, and the like, as would thereby make them liable to the damnation of hell. For however great an evil the sin of idolatry is in the sight of God, it may be supposed infinitely short of such doctrines as are propagated to his dishonour, in which he is thereby represented as acting inconsistent with himself. For as idolatry, being the sin of ignorance, it is more excusable, by want of opportunity, than such as are brought up under

the knowledge of the true God, who may have all manner of opportunity to be acquainted with the nature of his divine attributes.

S E C T. XLIII.

The doctrine of Adam's sin, descending to his posterity by generation, is shown to be nothing more than a mere sinful apology, made in order to excuse themselves for their actual transgressions.

AGAIN, it hath not only been reported, but even affirmed, for a certain fact, that what they call original sin, is by far the greatest above all others in the world; for this reason, because that all other sins, they say, proceed from it. Now what is all this but a mere painting of the devil, in order to dishonour God, and deceive his rational creatures, to encourage them in making a sinful apology, to excuse themselves for their actual transgressions. But to me it appears, that the belief and affirmation thereof, (to wit of this arch-heresy,) is the greatest sin in the Christian world; for not only Papists, but even Protestants, have apologized for all the different vices that have taken place, since above fourteen hundred years ago, upon account of this sin. Now the only original parent of this blasphemous doctrine was one Augustine, a man in the fourth century, (who may be said to have served by way of a mid-wife,

in bringing popery to the birth,) by whom this arch-heresy was first invented, and also received the sanction of the civil law, for its authority. The reason why I call this a blasphemous doctrine, is, because it represents the true God as an unjust judge, even such an one as to punish the innocent upon account of the guilty; a piece of injustice, and perhaps the highest aspersion that can possibly be thrown out against him, or that he can be impeached with. For it is simply impossible that any man, or set of men whatever, can be so daringly wild, and impiously wicked, as to take upon them to sacrifice the nature of so much as one of these divine attributes of God, in support of their own opinions, can possibly have their authority from him, but from the devil. What shall I say more, but only this, that these people's hearts are waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing; they refusing to see with their eyes, and to hear with their ears, least they should be converted, and I should heal them. Now, what I have laid down concerning this subject, is sufficient to detect the fraud, and drive these originalists from out of their refuge of lies. For which cause the devil hath not only protested, but has even declared war against me, because that I have not only pointed out, but have also exposed, and blown up, the very chief strength, and strong holds of his kingdom, by which not only he, but even all his different

subjects, servants, and allies whatever, will undoubtedly follow his example. This ancient father, to wit Augustine, pretended, that he had this doctrine of original sin (with different other tenets, in every degree as wild as itself) discovered to him by a revelation from heaven; but a doctrine built, depending for its foundation, and authority, at the expence of impairing any of God's moral attributes, and divine perfections, for the support thereof, appears to me to proceed from the devil, and not from God. But for my part, I pretend to no such revelations, but only this, that whatever degree of reason the great God hath been pleased to bestow, and endue me with, my desire is, that it may not only be employed, but improven, to the honour of him who is the author and giver thereof. Now I perceive, that as Dagon begins to sicken, her different votaries begin to tremble; and methinks, I, at present, see them all standing around her bed, attending upon her, with dejected looks, and mournful countenances, waiting to support, and bear up her head, in order to comfort her, in this her present distress, and severest pangs of her last illness. And if it should be the case, that she die of her wounds, her exit will not only cause great grief, but even lamentation, mourning, and woe, amongst such as are her only friends and favourite votaries. And if she shall chance to meet with a resurrection to life

again, it cannot possibly come from God, but from the devil, to whom she owes her origin, and also rests her dependence.

S E C T. XLIV.

An apology.

IF there was such a thing, as that fundry persons were brought up under gross darkness, and if one should inform them, that there is such a thing as light, while, perhaps, thousands were persuading them to the contrary, is it to be supposed that they will believe the one person, in a thing which they had never experienced, against the testimony of such numbers, who assured them otherwise? No; it is not to be supposed. But if he should have had the opportunity to direct them to a small chink, and shewed them the light clearly, then they would be convinced, from experience, against the influence of whatever numbers that had formerly imposed such a falsehood upon them. Similar thereto are all such, who are educated, and brought up, under the doctrine of original sin, with different others, much of the same stamp with itself, if one were to inform them of the mistake and falsehood thereof, is it possible that they could believe, when thousands are ready to confirm them in such gross darkness? Scarce possible indeed. But if they should be willing to lay aside the

prejudice of education, and judge impartially, in quest of the truth, when one is willing to shew them expressly how much the said doctrine is not only contrary, but even diametrically opposite to the nature of God, (by striking at the root, in overturning his justice,) then will they certainly be convinced of their mistake, and turn from the falsehood thereof, against whatever numbers, however ready they may be to impose upon them, in order that they may detain, and keep them in gross darkness: for it is morally certain, that except we lay ourselves open to the power of conviction, we can never possibly come to the knowledge of the truth.

Conclusion to the first part upon this subject.

TO conclude; I have now delivered my mind concerning the first part of this subject, but no further than it agrees with the nature and rectitude of the true God. And it now only remains for me to add, that what is composed is with as much perspicuity as possible, in order that whatever really comes from God may be established, because conformable to his essence; and whatever will not agree with the nature of God, but is altogether inconsistent therewith, can never possibly come from him; and whatever cannot possibly come from God must inevitably come from the devil; and whatever comes from the devil, it is but right that it be returned to him from whom

it came: for it is no more than what is just, that every one should have their own; yea, in all this, he hath received nothing over.

Hence, I apprehend, what is already expressed will be found sufficient to expel this pernicious heresy, or poisonous exhalations of these sophistical vapours, contained in that dark and sulphureous cloud, raised, to the dishonour of God, by the force of Augustine fire, (viz. blind zeal,) which cloud being the cause that has so much benighted the Christian world; and however extravagant my thoughts may be understood by men, concerning the doctrine of what they call original sin, they can be thought no more ridiculous than what it would be taken by Mahometans, if speaking against their Alcoran at Constantinople: for there is no person can possibly maintain a due right of the divine harmony that subsists betwixt God and his perfections, but what may lay his account to meet with persecution from men, according to the degree of their superstition. We know, assuredly, that God is holy, he is just, and he is good; and whatever may possibly be ascribed to him, tho' by all the creatures that he hath made, that would make him act different therefrom, or teach us otherwise, we are not to receive it, because to his dishonour. Hence, there is no person can possibly believe the doctrine of original sin, if not altogether ignorant concerning the

knowledge of the true God; for it is more possible to believe that the creature can exist independent of the Creator, than to admit that a just God would punish one innocent being for the offence of another, which it could neither foresee nor prevent; the one, by making him unjust, is infinitely more absurd, and to the dishonour of God, than the other, because it does not. Therefore, while others distinguish themselves, in throwing dishonour upon God, by their propagating and patronizing doctrines that would make him unjust, let us, through his goodness, distinguish ourselves, by rejecting every doctrine, or whatever may be held forth in his name, which is not conformable to these divine qualities he is possessed of, but are diametrically opposite thereto.

There is one thing still remains, which is worth being remarked, how that some, in order to evade the circumscribing the nature of their religion with the different doctrines contained therein, as being necessary, that they, viz. these doctrines, should be conformable to the perfections of the Deity, in harmonizing therewith, it being not only objected, but held by such, that, because of our knowing so little of the perfections of God, (mark this,) it is therefore by no means needful, that the different articles, contained in our religion, should either be modelled thereby, or subjected thereto. But, in answer to this

objection, although there should be ten thousand perfections in the Deity more than what he has made known, or are understood by us, this gives no right why we should deviate or depart therefrom, viz. these perfections, because we are still bound by God, as it being our indispensable duty to conform, in the different articles and doctrines of our religion, only with these perfections whereby he maketh himself manifest; and whatever is contrary thereto, God will by no means dispense with, as acceptable to him. Further, and if we should admit in conforming the different doctrines contained in our religion with what will not agree, but are only contrary to these different attributes wherein he hath so expressly manifested himself, this would be no less than to exchange what God has expressly declared, for what he hath not; and would thereby make an uncertainty assume the place of a fact, and a fact to give way, that an uncertainty may take place. Now, what would all this be, but only to confound his perfections in making each thereof to clash against another, in order to confirm, as authentic, though against God, the fantastic chimeras of fallible and designing men. Now, therefore, if this should be the case, that men are to take the liberty, as to dispense with the perfections of the Deity, in subjecting them to comply with the different articles of their religion, there is no doctrine can possibly be so

gross, but what men may take upon them to ascribe the authority thereof unto God, in order that it may the better pass undiscerned amongst men. But whatever that spirit be, that would have God (for the sake of their own favourite systems and opinions) to act against, as to make his divine attributes inconsistent with one another, or what may rather be said inconsistent with himself, cannot possibly proceed from God, but from that old deceiver, the father of lies, in order to counterfeit that which comes from above, whereby he may the easier deceive and lead aside a credulous world. It may be also remarked, from what follows, that it is generally the case with such who propagate and patronize doctrines subversive of the perfections of the Deity, that because against his nature, in order to cause fear, and subject by terror, that people may the easier submit thereto, they promise the highest degree of assurance to every particular person to accept of their opinions, denouncing anathemas, with threats of inevitable damnation, against every one that will not receive nor admit thereof.

P A R T S E C O N D.

A short or compendious view of some particular scriptures which these originalists have taken hold of, in order to strengthen themselves, and others, in support of original sin.

I Shall only take notice of a few singular scriptures whereunto these originalists have fled for refuge, in order to screen themselves from the truth: for they always take sanctuary under the literal meaning of the text, for the support of their own hypothesis; and, by using this rule, they are never at a loss to deceive the people.

There is one thing to be observed, which requires our strictest attention, being this, that not only the prophets, but also the apostles, especially St. Paul, who different times taketh hold of figures, or figurative speeches, in order to express their meanings, in making references on purpose to support their different arguments; and this is only intended for a more easy solution of their doctrines. But the building doctrines upon the express literal meaning of these figurative texts hath been the chief cause why Christianity hath been so much divided, misunderstood, and abused, among Christians. But the effectual method whereby we are to know and understand the true and proper meaning of the text, we must bring the literal meaning there-

of unto that divine test, viz. the nature of these his moral attributes, and try it thereby; and if it will not agree with the same, it is most certain that it is to be understood, not in a literal, but in a figurative meaning. For if the literal sense of the text will not agree with the nature and rectitude of his moral attributes, it is even as sure as God is God, that that is not its true and proper meaning, but must be understood either in a figurative, or some other sense. The consequence of the above hath not only hurt, but even ruined and defaced Christ's kingdom in this our world. Now, the first of these texts that I shall take notice of, is that which is mentioned by the apostle Paul, in the third chapter of his epistle to the Romans; being this, That there is none that doth good, no not one; and that they are all gone out of the way; and that there is none of them that doth good, not so much as one. Upon which scripture they lay very great stress, though the same is only meant in reference to the fourteenth and fifty-third Psalms, the first three verses of each of these two Psalms mean only the heathen nations, by whom they, viz. Israel, were carried away, and held in captivity. Verse 4th, "Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people as they eat bread, and call not upon the Lord;" which two Psalms are almost a repetition the one of the other.

Now, it is most evident, that what they here

take for one, is two different sets of people, viz. Jews and heathen nations, by whom the Jews, who are called his people, were held in captivity. For although these Psalms be called Psalms of David, it is clear from this last verse, that they were only Psalms which were penned during the time of the captivity in Babylon, either by Ezra, or some other person, nigh about the latter end of their captivity, which is evident from the fifth verse, where it is said, "they were in great fear, where no fear was: for God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth against thee; thou hast put them to shame, because God hath despised them." When it is said they were in great fear, this alludes to the writing issued out by king Ahasuerus, (upon the intercession of Haman,) against the Jews, to put them to death, which caused this terror. But when it is said there was no fear, it is meant by this, that because God was their protector and deliverer, there was no fear of his people. Again, it is said, for God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth against thee. HIM, here, means the singular, which denotes the utter destruction of that wicked Haman, which was their grand enemy and accuser. And also, thou hast put them to shame, because God hath despised them. This signifies the act issued out by king Ahasuerus, (who, upon the intercession of Esther and Mordecai,) in favours of the Jews, to defend themselves against

the attacks of their enemies, who had got the king's authority to destroy them; so that, by this second edict, their enemies were disappointed, and sorely confounded. Thus, by virtue of the said act, they got the victory, over not only the house of Haman alone, but also over all their different enemies in the said empire that were risen up against them, in order that they might put them to death. Hence all this great slaughter might have been prevented by countermanding the first edict, had it not been, that, according to the laws of the Medes and Persians, the king could not reverse his first commandment; therefore all he could do in favours of the Jews was to give them authority, by a second edict, to defend themselves and properties against the attacks of their different enemies. Now, for a further proof of the above, it appears entirely evident, that this is not a dependent but a past action, as may be understood from the whole. This being not only evident, but an indisputable fact, which is manifest from the fifth verse of the above Psalm, where it is said, "There were they in great fear, where no fear was." If the circumstance had not been past, it would have been expressed thus, There shall they be in great fear, where no fear is; but, on the contrary, because the circumstance being past, it is said, They were in great fear, where no fear was; (mark what follows,) for both these words WERE and

and was admit of a past action; for they can never possibly be applied to express that which is dependent, or to come, but only that which is already accomplished. And, to return, it is well known, that the Jewish nation, in St. Paul's time, were become, in every degree, as wicked as the heathen nations themselves; therefore the Apostle had a just right to put them all under one class. And it is fully evident, from these two Psalms, that there were two different distinct sets of people, viz both a wicked and a good, such as the Jews, who were called his peculiar, chosen, or elect people, and the heathen nations represented as wicked: for, when it is said, "Do they not know, that they eat up my people as bread," it means only this, do not the Gentiles know, that they eat up my people, the Jews, as they eat bread? From this it is evident, that these Psalms have not the very least reference to what they call original sin, though these originalists have most vainly imagined, from these texts, that the whole race of mankind were classed in one, where it is evident, from the above, that they were two distinct classes of people.

This is most obvious from the second verse of the above fifty-third Psalm, where it is said, "that God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God." Now, it is well known, that the words, *children of men*, in

this Psalm, as well as in other places, are only expressed in contradistinction to such as were called the children or sons of God, as were the Jews, who were called his people; and not only them alone, but also all such whatever as acknowledged him, and lived in obedience to his will.

Again, it is said in the fifty-first Psalm, verse fifth, "I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Now, I would ask these originalists, who was it that shaped the Psalmist? Was it not God? Most certainly, and none other. For it is said, in the hundred and nineteenth Psalm, verse seventy-third, "Thy hands have made me and fashioned me," and likewise in the hundred and thirty-ninth Psalm, and also in Job thirty-first, verse fifteenth, "Did not he that made me in the womb, make him; and did not one fashion us in the womb?" Now, who will be so daringly wild as to say, that God shaped the Psalmist in sin, when in the womb? Is it possible that this can be supposed any thing else than blasphemy, for to say that God shaped the Psalmist in sin? No, it cannot. Because it would make God the author of sin.

Again, had it been possible that the Psalmist meant any reference to the literal sense of this text, it could consist of no more than this, as we see from Leviticus, chapter twelfth, verse second, down to the end of the said chapter,

where the woman, when delivered of a child, was supposed, and held as unclean, till once the ceremonies of her purification were accomplished. And also in the fifteenth chapter of the said book, wherein a woman, when in her flowers, was always held as unclean, till all the ceremonies for her purification, were used, according to statute of the said law. And as the woman, being always deemed, amongst that people, as unclean, when in these different states, mentioned in the above, from the latter case, the Psalmist might suppose that God shaped him in the woman, while she was in that unclean state, as they supposed it to be. Whereas it is evident, that so soon as the woman hath conceived, she ceases from being unclean, until her delivery.

And as concerning the substance of the father, to wit, the seed of Jesse, of which substance he was made, he never so much as makes the very least mention, or reference thereto; but only to the mother, (upon account of her supposed pollution,) that conceived him, and to him that formed him, which was God. Thus it is evident, from the above, that God formed David, and it is most certain that David never reflected upon God, in accusing him for his sin. Therefore the text must certainly have another meaning than the literal, which they so tenaciously have affixed thereto. If David was conceived, and brought forth under the pollution and guilt

of original sin, as has been warmly asserted by such as are advocates for this heresy, how then could our Saviour, who is said expressly to have been made, and also born of the seed of David, be free thereof, or escape its pollution? But of this more afterwards. Hence, the meaning can be nothing else than this, that by bad example, custom, and habit, from his very youth up, he had acquired strong habits of sin, which were most expressive, from what he had received in his youth, which answers the very same with ourselves, unto this present time. For the word shapen, means only brought forth in the original; and the word conceived, means that she warmed, or nursed him. The above is as much as to say, I have been a sinner from the womb, or from my youth up I have contracted strong habits of sin. That this is a scriptural figurative way of aggravating wickedness, is evident from Psalms fifty-eighth, where it is said in verse third, "The wicked are estranged from the womb, they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies." And again Isaiah, chapter forty-eighth, verse eighth, part of the latter clause, "and wast called a transgressor from the womb." From the above it is obvious, that what is there mentioned means only very heinous offenders, set on iniquity by prevailing habits and customs. This is spoken of the house of Jacob, as a national body, which sheweth that it is a proverbial

speech, applicable to communities, as well as singular persons. Upon the other hand, it is also used to signify, early and settled habits of virtue, as it is expressed by Job, chapter thirty-first, verse eighteenth, "From my youth he (to wit, the fatherless) was brought up with me, as with a father, and I have guided her (to wit, the widow) from my mother's womb." Hence it is clear, from the above texts, that this is nothing more than a mere proverbial way of speech, expressing only early habits of sin or virtue. For it was not possible, that the wicked could speak lies as soon as they were born; because, at that period of life, they were altogether incapable to speak. Neither was it possible for Job to bring up the fatherless, and guide the widow, from his mother's womb, when he was nothing more than an infant.

Again, chapter fourteenth, verse fourth, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." And in chapter fifteenth, verse fourteenth, "What is man that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?" Again, chapter twenty-fifth, verse fourth, "How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean, that is born of a woman?" As concerning uncleanness imputed to women, this is what I have already made clear, from Leviticus, chapter twelfth, and chapter fifteenth. The first of these texts in

Job, may be understood to mean the uncertainty of life, and the certainty of death; as is clear from the following verses, to wit, the fifteenth and sixteenth; and likewise chapter twenty-fifth, is only proving the great difference that there is, and still exists, both in perfection and purity, betwixt the Creator and the creature, speaking as respecting the heavens (meaning the stars) are not clean in his sight, that is to say in comparison with God, and that he charges his angels with folly; how much more abominable and filthy is man, who drinketh iniquity like water? Hence there is nothing more evident, than that this thirst after iniquity was not circumscribed to Adam's posterity alone; for he himself, though entirely pure and free from the pollution of sin, accepted of the very first draught of iniquity that offered unto him, though not accustomed thereto, from an animal state, as those of his posterity were before they became 'rationals. Now it is evident, from all these different texts, that they have not the very least connection with the sense in which they have construed them, in reference to what they call original sin. The next place to be taken notice of, is in Romans fifth, from the beginning of the twelfth verse, to the end of the said chapter, (all which being represented under one figure, meaning what relates to Adam's posterity) these ten verses having been taken for the great bulwark,

upon which foundation they have built what they call the great Christian doctrine of original sin; and which is the very soul of priestcraft, (Popery not excepted) and great helm wherewith they reduce mankind *rational*, as fellow creatures, to beasts of burden, in order that they may the more passively submit to whatever doctrines they are pleased to impose or load them with. And in order to show the impropriety thereof, I shall consider in what light they, viz. these verses, are to be discerned by us. The first thing that is necessary to be considered, for the better understanding the Apostle, respecting what he writes, whether it is to be understood in a literal or figurative sense, as that we may the more easily ascertain the true and proper meaning thereof; it is most obvious, that the apostle Paul, through a great part of his epistles, often makes use of different figures, for the better illustrating his doctrine, in order that it might the more easily be understood by the various capacities of those to whom he wrote. For sometimes he represents nations, or bodies of people, under such figures as vessels of mercy; other times, as vessels of wrath; sometimes, under the figure of a good olive-tree; at other times, under the figure of a wild olive-tree. Again, in teaching the weak, he sometimes says, that he fed them with milk; other times he represents himself, under the figure of a wise master-builder; sometimes, he re-

presents Christians under the figure of the temple of God; at other times, he represents the progress of Christians, in the gospel, to the races in the Olympic Games; sometimes, under the figure of racers; other times, under the figure of wrestlers; sometimes, of warriors or soldiers; sometimes, under one kind of figure, sometimes under another. Which few figures may suffice, for the many more used, not only by St. Paul, but also by the greatest part of both prophets and apostles. But when the Apostle came to speak concerning the Jews, in classing them with the Gentiles, he generally couched his meaning under different figures, lest he should have given them offence, and thereby become disgusted at the gospel, by interrupting his policy, where he sayeth that he caught them with guile. The Apostle's chief design, in referring them to the figure, mentioned in the fourteenth verse, was, that he might represent the Jews, who took sanctuary under the ceremonial law, (the punctual observance of which law, they sustained for salvation, independent of the mercy of God, as offered to us in the gospel,) just as guilty as others, because they were become in every respect as wicked as the Gentiles, therefore judged it necessary to class them all equally alike under sin; and thus he begins with the twelfth verse, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed

“upon all men, for that all have sinned.” (A specimen of the nature of this death may be seen in section eighteenth of this subject.) And so on to the latter clause of the fourteenth verse, where Adam is represented as the figure of him that was to come. Thus the Apostle maketh no hesitation, but tells them expressly, that it was a figure, by which he brought them under the same condemnation with the Gentiles; shewing them how much they stood in need (as being under the same necessity,) of the mercy of God through Christ. Verse fifteenth, “But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one, many be dead; much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many;” and so on to the latter end of the said chapter.

Besides all this, the Apostle expressly acknowledges, that he sometimes speaks, not by commandment, but only by permission. This being the case, there are none can make it appear, but that he often-times spake not by commandment, but only by permission, though that he himself maketh no mention thereof; and if this was the case, there are none can prove, but that the reasoning contained in these different verses may have been as much expressed by permission, as any thing he ever spake or delivered for the instruction of others, though no mention be

made thereof by him. This being the case, not only of the apostle Paul alone, but also of the rest of the apostles, that they were not always under the direction of the divine Spirit in what they spake; we see for proof, how that they sometimes differed in sentiment to that degree, till they not only sharply opposed, but also separated one from another, which is an infallible evidence, that they often-times only spake, according to their judgment, like other men.

Now, I would reckon myself singularly obliged to any such as would inform me, by what means those who understand and take up that part of these ten verses, relating to Adam and his posterity, in a literal sense, and not in a figurative, can possibly reject transubstantiation, or clear themselves of being culpable in not believing it; for the one is expressly declared by the Apostle to be a figure, but the other is not.

If you ask these originalists, upon what account they receive the one, and reject the other? their answer is this, because transubstantiation is contrary to common sense. But, in answer thereto, can there be any thing more opposite to common sense than that doctrine which would make God unjust? Certainly not.

Hence it appears to me simply impossible, that they have any right to reject the one more than the other. But if there be any difference, the one, where there is no mention of figures, is more

excusable than the other, and that by a great many degrees: for in the one, viz. transubstantiation, there is nothing against the nature of God; whereas the other, viz. original sin, strikes at the very root of his justice. Now, if all these different figures are to be taken up, and understood in a literal sense, if this were the case, would not the first thereof be a transmigrating mankind into vessels? A second, nations and bodies of people into olive-trees. A third, transmigrating the instruction of the word into milk. A fourth, himself, viz. Paul, into a wise master-builder. A fifth, would be a transmigrating Christians into the temple of God. A sixth, the progress of Christianity into the races and racers in the Olympic Games. A seventh, transmigrating the fore-said into wrestlers, warriors, soldiers, and the like. And this last figure of all, the transmigrating a just God into a mere tyrant, capable of being guilty of the highest acts of injustice, even no less than in punishing the innocent upon the account of the guilty; a thing altogether simply impossible with a just God. God, indeed, as has been observed elsewhere, may take away the child of a wicked person, in way of punishment to the parent; but what is the parent's punishment becomes the greatest blessing to the child, because it prevents its learning the wickedness of the parent, whereby it might have become as guilty and liable to punishment as the parent itself. There-

fore, as it has been formerly observed, that it was altogether impossible for any of Adam's posterity to be there present in person, either by commission, vote, or proxy, and that which was done before they had an existence, being altogether out of their power, as they could neither foresee the event, nor prevent the action; therefore could not possibly be liable to the punishment; it being simply impossible, because diametrically opposite to the rectitude of his nature to require obedience above the ability of the creature to perform; or, as to punish the innocent upon account of the guilty, is no less than one of the highest aspersions that can be thrown out against a just God; for I always understood, that he had given authority to his prophets to declare, in his name, saying, "Will not the God of all the earth do justly?" Yea, most certainly he will; for there is not the least reason left for us to believe otherwise. Therefore it is evident from the above, that this last figure, (meaning only that part of the reasoning that refers to Adam and his posterity,) as being so styled by the Apostle himself, is not to be understood in a literal, but in a figurative sense, as well as the other figures above-mentioned. Yea, how many thousand volumes of sophistry have been wrote upon this subject; whereas, if they had but only brought it to this one infallible test, viz. the pure rectitude of his nature, it would have saved them all that trouble, and would have

furnished them with such a bar, from whence there is no appeal.

Further, I shall mention the first four verses of the fourth chapter of Paul's second epistle to Timothy, with observations thereon, where the Apostle, in his charge to Timothy, saith, "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick, and the dead at his appearing, and his kingdom: Preach the word, be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears." Thus, in like manner are all such, who having the above itching ears, that will neither admit themselves, nor yet suffer others, to bring the scriptures of truth, such as these dark and figurative texts, unto that infallible test, viz. the rectitude of his divine nature, in order to try, and see whether they will agree therewith, either in a literal or figurative sense. It being now evident that these, and such as these, are the said itching ears mentioned in the above by the Apostle, verse fourth, "And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." In like manner are all those who circumscribe the scriptures to a sense different from the above test, having most visibly

fallen therefrom, by turning themselves unto falsehoods, which, when weighed in this balance of the sanctuary, (viz. the above test,) will be found wanting, because that fables, when weighed therein, are lighter than vanity. The Apostle gives Timothy this charge, in order to reprove, rebuke, and exhort all such with authority, whether seasonable, or unseasonable, to them that would not endure sound doctrine, according to the nature of the above test, which is agreeable to the essence and perfections of God himself.

And to conclude this second part, I shall only add a few particulars more, the importance of which does not only require, but deserves our highest attention, it being the only subterfuge whereunto they flee for safety; which is, that so soon as you come to reject, whatever doctrines they have built upon the literal meaning of the scriptures, when once these doctrines have received the sanction of fallible men for their authority, (tho' not agreeing with the nature and rectitude of the true God, such as his holiness, his justice, his goodness, and truth, the same being inconsistent therewith, both in a literal and figurative sense,) the only refuge they generally have recourse to, is, by positively affirming, that you are not so much as to call in question whatever hath received the above authority. Again, they will not only admit you to try, but they themselves will even quarrel with whatever will a-

gree with that divine test; but whatever will not agree with the foresaid test, (because inconsistent therewith,) they will not so much as admit you either to try or call it in question, but must receive its authority, as authentic, whenever it comes to hand; and by this very means men are never at a loss, in the way of religion, to father the grossest absurdities upon God. And it is also by the effect of this very cause, independent of another, by which not only Christianity, by reason of so many different errors and heresies, hath been seduced, but from whence also all the different idolatries and Pagan superstition, in the religious worship of the heathen world, hath arisen and taken place. To illustrate this; if his present Majesty should establish a code of just and equitable laws, for the regulation of his kingdom, and if he himself should break through these laws, to the hurt of his different subjects, would not this be unjust, and a lessening of his dignity? Most certainly it would. Most similar thereto are all such as have held forth and measured out the true God, who has given a collection of just and equitable laws, agreeable to the nature of his revealed will, in the regulation of his kingdom, for the good of his creatures; so that if he were to break through these laws, to the hurt of his creatures, (as he never possibly will,) would not this be unjust, and a diminishing his dignity more still? Most certainly it

would. But for men to say, in confirmation of this heresy, in order to pervert the truth, that because God is not accountable to any for his actions, (as neither he is,) does this make an unjust action, when perversely ascribed to him by men, though inconsistent with the nature of God, justifiable? Certainly not. For if a small personage should, deliberately, be guilty in committing a piece of the highest injustice, it would, no doubt, certainly lessen his dignity; but if a great personage should be guilty, even of a lesser degree of injustice, it would certainly be a greater indignity still: for the greater the personage is, the ascribing injustice thereto is still the greater dishonour to his character, he having the greater advantages, from his sphere of life, to acquire more knowledge than the other.

I would further observe, (it deserving our attention,) that it is to be remarked, as an infallible evidence of doctrines being infinitely absurd, when men, in support thereof, are reduced to that necessity, in ascribing to God, (because not accountable to any for his procedure,) actions of such a quality as are diametrically opposite to the very nature and rectitude of his being. And what is all this, when done, but a sacrificing the pure and holy nature of God, in order to support their own falsehoods?

Lastly, From the whole, for men to suppose, that God would make, and give out a catalogue

of just and equitable laws, agreeable to the revealed nature of his divine will, for the regulation and good of his rational creatures, and to hold forth, that he himself, because not accountable to any for his procedure, may very justly break through and dispense with these laws, in the damnation of his creatures, though for no fault of their own, but only for the offence of another, which they could neither foresee nor prevent, is positively a piece of the greatest injustice, dishonour, or indignity, that can possibly be ascribed to God. And this is actually the case with all such as believe and only take the nature of justice to arise from absolute power, independent of equity, and not from principle. And it is also to be remarked, that there is nothing can possibly proceed from God (for directing his rational creatures to live in obedience to his will,) of a less quality than what is agreeable to the rectitude of his being. Therefore, whatever laws are given to us by him, are no more than only an express transcript of his nature. Thus, it is morally impossible to make justice to dwell with injustice, or for a just God to depart from himself.

And also, whenever we come to refuse religion, or revelation, the proper freedom of being tried by that divine test, to wit, the nature and rectitude of the true God, as revealed to us by himself, whereby we may the better understand

its authority; whenever this is the case, there is no writing, or religion whatever, can possibly be so absurd, when once it has received the sanction of fallible men for its authority, but what will actually be embraced, and pass current, for divine, amongst its different votaries, and not only by them alone, but, by the same law, hath a right to be sustained by all to have come from God. Thus, by making every religion divine, puts an end to all true religion; which is all owing to their removing that test whereby we are to know whether it is true or false. For whoever refuses the liberty to others, and will not admit what comes under the name of revelation to be brought to the said test, whereby we may know whether it comes from God or not, (or if it is to be understood in a literal or figurative sense,) and not only this, but also the different doctrines of men, in order, that they may be tried thereby; those who hold the above sentiments are not the declared, but secret enemies of God, which is much worse; for one may evade a declared enemy, but a concealed they cannot. Hence, whoever refuses that we are to understand, and receive our knowledge of God, as agreeable to the unchangeable rectitude of his divine nature, but are to receive him in whatever light he is set before us by men, independent of the above test, whatever worship is paid thereto, is only to another, and not unto him; because we must first

know what is to be understood concerning the nature of God, before we can make him the object of our worship. For we are by no means to imagine that God is changeable, in the essence of religion and worship, (as appointed by him to his creatures,) like to the different modes and customs used amongst men; or that he is to be pleased with one thing to-day, and another to-morrow; for God is always unchangeably the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever. But of all the different religions, that ever took place amongst men, there is none to equal the Christian: yea, though they were to be accumulated, and laid in the balance together, they would only be like as to the small dust that cleaveth to the scale, when compared with the Christian, especially when once it comes to be stripped of the different alloys of corruption that hath been mixed thereinto, by ignorant and designing men, of which this is one of the grossest, that I have been endeavouring to purge it of. For which cause there is not the least doubt, but I will be exclaimed against, (for detecting the adulteration thereof,) by all such as are concerned in the fraud.

P A R T T H I R D.

Some reflections concerning what is contained in the third and last part of this subject, with answers to what hath been advanced, by a certain stickler, (in favours of this heresy,) in confuting, to wit, That if such a thing as original sin had an existence amongst men, as descending by generation, in virtue of Adam's transgression, Christ, as man, could by no means have been free of its pollution, with answers thereto; first, from nature; second, from scripture, to prove the absurdity of this advancement.

ONE day as a certain clergyman, in haranguing his audience, with many persuasive arguments, in favour of what they call the great Christian doctrine of original sin, said, that some, in order to condemn this divine doctrine, alledged, that if such a doctrine were true, Christ, as man, could not escape being defiled thereby; therefore could not possibly be free of that pollution, nor of the different impurities arising therefrom; whereas, on the contrary, it is evident, that Christ was entirely free of all manner of sin. In answer thereto, this stickler, being so eager in pursuit of his argument, most ignorantly affirmed, that the seed of the male, when received by the female, did not partake of her nature, but only like as to the

seed of a vegetable, when fallen into the earth, and through the nourishment thereof, groweth up unto maturity, void of either part, or quality, of its mother earth. And as the seed of the vegetable partaketh not of the earth, neither doth the seed of the male partake with the nature of the female; and from this he made it evident, that Christ behoved to be entirely free of original sin, and from whatever impurities that doth arise therefrom. If this doctrine, however sophistically advanced, by this stickler, had been made evident, by the foresaid proof, he would have partly gained his attempt. But he is far from proving what he advanced; on the contrary, nothing in God's creation could have retorted so much against him, as will appear from what follows. And therefore I shall essay to clear up this absurdity, by setting the same in its proper light. And with respect to the seed of the male being received by the female, and not partaking of its nature, how mean, pitiful, and inconsistent, is this advancement, as will be made evident from the following observations. And first, it deserves our attention, as being obvious, when properly understood, that the seed of the male and female, by meeting, and mixing together in conjunction, at the time of copulation, and by the one generating with the other, the same genus or species of beings is produced therefrom. And further, as an infallible proof of the fore-

said, it is most certain, that when any two animals, of different species, chance to meet together, in way of copulation, either the male with the female, or the female with the male, does it ever come to pass that the species produced therefrom partakes of the male, and not of the female also? No, there never was such an instance either heard of or seen in the world; but that all such beings, as were procreated after the above manner, did infallibly partake, both in the form and nature of each animal, met together in the said action. Again, it is morally certain that if any two animals should accidentally meet together in copulation, different in complexion, and distinct from one another, both in colour, mode, and nature, the issue or produce thereof, will still partake of both animals, not only in complexion, but also in both nature and form. Further, what follows will evidently prove the deceitfulness of this sophistical argument. For instance, should two persons, of different complexions, to wit, a white male, and a black female, meet together, in way of copulation, would the issue thereof be white? According to the above doctrine, the produce of necessity must be white. But nature itself, to a demonstration, doth prove the deceit. For example, should the male be white, and the female black, or the female white, and the male black, the issue thereof will still be the same, neither white nor black,

but will partake alike of both. So that, when a white and a black male and female are met together, as in the above, the produce thereof will infallibly be, what is called a tawny, or mulatto; but never one instance was known or heard of, that a perfect white male and a black female had a real black, or real white issue; but always proved a tawny or mulatto. Now if this were to be the case, that the nature of the issue depended entirely upon the male, independent of the female, both in form and nature, with respect to a rational creature, the issue would still be the same, though with whatever kind of animal beings it was procreated with by the male. But nature, to a demonstration, proves the reverse, and absurdity thereof; for when this unfortunately chanceth to be the case, there is nothing but a disagreeable object produced, not proper to be mentioned.

Thus, it is evident, by exposing the above sophistry, that if there were such a thing as original sin in the world, as being not only alledged, but also asserted by these sophistical teachers, to be interwoven with our constitution, and entwisted into the very nature of mankind; if this were the case, as asserted by these originalists, how then could the Saviour of the world be guiltless thereof? But it is morally certain to the contrary, that he was quite pure and free from all manner of sin or imperfection. Now if

there were such a thing as hereditary sin in the world, I have made it appear, not only to a probability, but even to a demonstration itself, that no human form could be conceived, and born of a woman, without partaking of its defilement. How lively is the figure our Saviour makes, that when the blind leadeth the blind, both fall into the ditch; and likewise what is expressed by the prophet, that the leaders of this people cause them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed.

To return. Secondly, This clergyman was certainly most excusable, in one respect, for what he advanced; and the reason why, because it is to be supposed, by the said advancement, that he had never so much as read the scriptures with judgment. But, indeed, it must be acknowledged, that if he had not read the scriptures, he most certainly, according to the station and sphere of life he stood in, should have read them with more attention, conform to the spirit thereof; for if he had been acquainted with the scriptures, he would certainly have known, that it is said by the Spirit of God, Acts, chapter second, verse thirtieth, "There-
"fore being a prophet, and knowing that God
"hath sworn with an oath to him, that of the
"fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he
"would raise up Christ, to sit on his throne:" Chap. thirteenth, verse twenty-third, "Of this

“man’s seed hath God, according to his promise, raised unto Israel a Saviour Jesus.” And again, Romans, chapter first, verse third, “Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh.” Chapter ninth, part of verse fifth, “Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came.” Galatians, chapter third, verse sixteenth, “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, and to seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ.” 2 Timothy, chapter second, verse eighth, “Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead, according to my gospel.” Hebrews, chapter second, verse fourteenth, “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same: that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil;” verse sixteenth, “For verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham.” Revelation, chapter twenty-second, verse sixteenth, “I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the off-spring of David, and the bright and morning star.” These few scriptures, which I have taken notice of, among many others similar thereto, may not

only suffice, but are a sufficient evidence, to prove the absurdity of that doctrine, held forth by the said clergyman, that Christ did not partake with the woman in her nature, but that it is evident, from the above scriptures, that he did actually partake of her nature, and also took part with the same. For if Christ did not partake with the woman in her nature, he could have no relation to the human race; which would put an end to whatever claims could be made thereto.

And to show the abilities of this divine, and how much he was versant in the knowledge of the scriptures, at least if he was not, he ought to have been so, before he took upon him to teach the principles of Christianity to any people. Hence it is obvious, that this insurmountable evidence, against what they call original sin, which this clergyman took upon him, and attempted to overturn, was altogether too hard, and far beyond his power to effect. For it apparently is an irresistible proof, and of such a nature as will sufficiently stand the test against both men and devils. Before I take my leave of the said clergyman, it is necessary to ask him one question, which is this is, By what means he comes to abandon, and give up with his different strong holds, without striking his colours, and surrendering to his antagonist? But, methinks, I just now see him, to wit, this chevalier, not behaving as a brave and valiant warrior, but like some

daftardly coward, deserting all his various strong holds, and places of defence, in which he formerly had so much confidence, whereon he leaned all his strefs. Thus, before ever his antagonist makes his approach, whereunto does he fly for safety, but only to that chimerical fortress, (to wit, that the seed of the man, or issue arising therefrom, does not partake of woman's nature,) from which he hath been so lately dislodged. And he now being dispossessed of every shelter, again, methinks, I just now hear him lamenting, and crying out like Micah, they have taken away my gods, and what have I more!

The answer of the above question, respecting the strong holds, means these different texts of scripture, under the literal sense of which he had taken sanctuary, in order to shelter and screen himself from the truth. The first thereof, is in the fifty-first Psalm, verse fifth, "Behold, I was "shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother "conceive me." Again, Job, chapter fourteenth, verse fourth, "Who can bring a clean thing out "of an unclean? Not one." Chapter fifteenth, verse fourteenth, "What is man that he should "be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that "he should be righteous." Chapter twenty-fifth, verse fourth, "How can man be justified with "God? or how can he be clean that is born of a "woman?" There is nothing can be more evident, than what is deducible from the above

texts, that Christ partook of the different passions, that were due to men from the nature of the woman. I shall not, at present, mention any further proof, these texts being sufficient to evince for the rest. Hence all this figurative uncleanness, which is literally said to arise from the woman, independent of the man, under which he formerly had so much laboured, in order to prove his argument, must here pass for nought, by his freely giving up in favours of his antagonist. And when so soon as ever it comes to serve his turn, all that former pollution of unrighteousness, that is said originally to arise and proceed from the woman, he immediately frees her of; and, by turning the scale, he rolls it altogether over upon the man, to whom no part of the nature and pollution thereof was formerly imputed, (but are still said to arise from the woman;) which scriptures he had taken to shelter and screen himself from seeing the truth. Hence it is obvious, from the above, and is entirely descriptive of what these originalists are capable of, when once reduced and brought to a shift. Now will any of the human world, but so much as inform me, and make it appear, that if there had been such a thing as that original sin had had an existence, by what means could the Saviour of mankind have been free thereof. But it is morally certain to the contrary, that he was entirely pure from all manner of pollution, or defilement by

fin, although participating of the nature of the woman, as proven from the above; it being beyond the power of all the sophistry, infidelity, and powers of darkness, when combined together, to prove it otherwise; for facts are stubborn things, and there is no reasoning against them.

Before I proceed any further, I shall take notice of a second evasion, advanced in favours of this heresy, in order that they may get quit of our Saviour's partaking with the woman in her nature, whereby they say, that the virgin Mary was regenerated before his conception; by which means, he behoved to be entirely free of original sin. If this should be sustained as valid, I shall suppose, that if one or two persons, viz. a male and a female being regenerated, whether before or after marriage, according to this hypothesis, whatever children were procreated, after regeneration, behoved to be entirely free from original pollution. This is one method, I acknowledge, they have discovered on purpose that they may get rid of Christ being defiled by the consequence of Adam's transgression. But if this advancement were just, there is only but a part of mankind can be admitted to partake of Adam's sin, and the residue would not; which, if they can fully prove to be the case, it may be sustained; and if not, it must perish in course, along with the rest of their hypothesis.

What I have expressed, in the above, is in or-

der to state and expose the absurdity of this sophistical reasoner, that it may not only appear, but that it also may be understood, in its due and proper light, upon account of the many deceivers that are gone out into the world, in order to lead aside the weak, the credulous, and unthinking part of mankind, into these crooked paths, whereby they lye in wait to deceive the unwary and benighted travellers; intending, if possible, to have them entangled, and held fast in their snare at last. Now by reason of this sophister's fraud being discovered, methinks I, at present, behold him all in confusion, standing speechless and confounded, for the sake of his favourite Diana, least she should come to be despised, and set at nought; and, as being astonished, his countenance was changed, and the thoughts of his heart now troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees, like king Belshazzar's, smote one against another. And, in the midst of all this great distress, and anguish of mind, he cries out, and calls for the astrologers, magicians, and sooth-sayers, (to wit, such as are the chief patrons and sticklers for this heresy; of all heresies whatever, that takes place amongst men, there cannot possibly be a greater, than that which makes God unjust, by ascribing to him, such as punishing the innocent upon account of the guilty,) to his assistance, that whoever would step in for his relief, should be rewarded accord-

ing to their merit. For as the Babylonians were enemies to God's people, by whom they were not only led, but kept in bondage; the votaries of what is called original sin are greater enemies still, not only to his people, by keeping them in captivity, but even to God himself, by making him unjust.

This doctrine, (with various others, which are said to arise therefrom, and are still sustained by such, as the consequence thereof,) whatever men may advance in its favours, it is of such a nature, that although the devil had summoned up all the different powers of darkness, in order to assist in the device, it is not possible that they could have invented any thing more to the indignity, or dishonour of God, though the acknowledgment of said doctrine be held by such, as the very first step that leads in the way to heaven. For it is only in virtue of this blasphemous heresy, (viz. that which its votaries call original sin,) schemed out by the devil, in order to blacken and throw dishonour upon God, whereby he may become an example of the highest species of injustice amongst men: this is no more, than what is manifest from the wild hypothesis on which they have built every doctrine, proceeding from this tenet, which has been invented to the dishonour of God. And however men may look upon it, I do not know, if there can possibly be an equal, or greater sin under the canopy,

than to propagate, patronize, and require the unreasonable belief of that which is inconsistent with the nature of God, by ascribing his authority, in support of what would make him unjust, viz. the punishing of the innocent upon the account of the guilty, and in requiring more of his creatures than what they are able to perform. Yea, a most shocking theology indeed! And it is only because he is merciful, long-suffering, and patient, that such are not consumed in a moment, for setting him forth in a light contrary to that which he hath declared, and manifested of himself; saying, that he is holy, he is just, and he is good, forgiving iniquity to the penitent and repenting sinner. But the above is no less than a downright contradiction of the whole. These, with whatever doctrines of the like nature, though diametrically opposite to the very essence of the Deity, when once canonized by the sanction of fallible men, and in every degree as fallible heads; the patronizing of which, by putting on grimace, in order that they, viz. these doctrines, may be established and received as divine, they are held forth by such as fundamental truths, whereby they may the easier bewilder and deceive the ignorance of a credulous world; still pronouncing and thundering out volleys of anathemas against all such whatever as will not receive them, as divine, into the calendar of their belief. But do not such know, that God has,

in every degree, as good a right, if not better, to anathematize all such, whoever they be, that hold forth, and patronize doctrines, inconsistent with the very nature and perfections of the Deity.

Further, as it was intimated to John, concerning the church of Smyrna, saying, "I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not; but are the synagogue of Satan." Now what is here expressed, concerning the church of Smyrna, may, with as just propriety, be applied, after this manner, to such as are taken notice of in the above, "I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Christians, and are not; but are the synagogue of Satan;" because they do not only propagate, but also patronize doctrines, the essence whereof expressly representeth God as one that is unjust. And not only this, but they are infinitely more industrious in persuading credulous people into the belief of such nostrums, than what they are to make them good; for they confidently affirm, that upon the belief of these speculative opinions, they, in virtue thereof, will become good in course.

Now it has ever been the case with all such as hold the above opinions, with different others of like nature, in every respect as impure as themselves, they are by far the most rigid in the circumstantial or ceremonial part of religion. This they do in order that they may gain favour, by

appearing more zealous for God than others. For an infallible proof of which, see Montan, the heresiarch, who lived in the second century, he was a most strict disciplinarian, and kept a fast for the space of three lents, in order that he might the better deceive the people, by appearing under the sanction of such an extraordinary degree of piety.

From what hath been advanced upon this subject, I apprehend that there remains no other refuge at present, but that one bare assertion to which they still have recourse, it being a subterfuge that never fails them, wherein they always study to shelter and screen themselves from the truth; and also serves as a sanctuary for whatever doctrines they hold, though diametrically opposite to the nature of the true God. Further, from what has been expressed concerning this subject, there is not the least doubt but that such whose time are still spent, and taken up, in the cultivation of this chimerical plant, by pruning its different branches, digging and dressing about the root thereof, will be offended, because of its not only being curbed in its growth, but pulled up by the very roots, where it is now exposed above ground, without moisture, and left to the inclemency of the weather, to be scorched by the drought thereof. But since those who esteem it their greatest honour to be digging around this favourite plant, cannot dispense with

the loss thereof, their chief business being to replant it again into the same soil from whence it was digged, before it wither and be dried up. This being the case, methinks I just now see these originalists employed, in a most active manner, in replanting it into the same soil from whence it was taken, least it should be parched, and thereby refuse to incorporate with the ground, to the irreparable loss thereof.

I cannot conclude what I have wrote upon this, with the two former parts of this subject, without observing, from the whole, that what I have composed has been studied with as much brevity, as the nature and importance of the subject would admit of; and have used no unfair arguments, in support of my cause; but, on the contrary, nothing but strict and sound reasoning, conform to the dictates of truth, in order to detect and expel that sophistry, which has so much bewildered the simple and credulous part of mankind, to the hurt and dishonour of Christianity. For whatever knowledge I have received from God, to him, and him alone, I acknowledge myself indebted, upon the account thereof; and also, under an indispensable obligation to deliver the same to the unprejudiced part of mankind, as being accountable; and therefore would suppose myself culpable if I did not. But those who are prejudiced, and shut up themselves, as being proof against conviction, when

the Saviour of the world made little or nothing thereof, I far less pretend to it. If I have declared myself according to truth, then believe me, and if not agreeable thereto, believe me not. Thus, I have ended all that is necessary at present, concerning this subject; therefore, let such as desire to live, and put honour upon the true God, not linger, but give up with that ancient herefy, before it be too late. For it is in every degree as possible for the creature to produce a world from nothing, as it is possible to procreate and convey by generation to posterity, so much as one additional quality, whether of good or evil, than what was originally given thereto, and received from God. And having proved this doctrine directly repugnant to the nature and rectitude of the true God; now, let these my antagonists point out so much as one article, I have used in condemnation thereof, that is opposite to, or disagrees with the perfections of the Deity. And though I have advanced nothing but what maintains a due right of that divine harmony, which subsists betwixt God and his attributes; yet although their maxims be diametrically opposite thereto, they confidently affirm (without any authority from God,) of me being wrong, and that they only themselves are in the right. This is actually the case, though at no less expence than that of his justice, his goodness, and truth; and, in so doing they declare themselves equal with

that ancient people, mentioned by the Prophet of old, who called evil good, and good evil, and yet they say, that the Lord delighteth in them. Now Christ never taught, nor did require, the belief of any thing, but what was agreeable to justice, and the dictates of sound reason; but they, by putting out the eyes, or mental sight, can believe God to act independent of both. Now what is all this, but a profaning of these sacred titles, whereby he maketh himself known, to wit, of his being both just and good, and not only just and good, but also merciful and gracious. The original source from whence all these different fundamental mistakes ariseth, that hath been ascribed to man, they proceed not from what has been falsely surmised of him, but only from his consisting of a two-fold nature, to wit, both that of an animal and a rational; so that when they comply with, and follow the dictates of the animal, they are called the children of men; but, on the other hand, when they allow themselves to conform to, and follow the dictates of the rational, they are called the children or sons of God.

Further, according to the New Testament, the animal nature is called flesh, and the rational part is called spirit; the one of these being called flesh, and the other spirit, is in contradistinction to each other; because the animal part mindeth only the things of the flesh, or animal man; but the spiritual, or rational part, regardeth the

things of the spirit. The carnal mind, which means the animal spirit, or natural man, is said to be enmity against God, because it cannot be subject to the law of God; but the rational part, which is said to be a ray of his divine nature, is called spiritual, because when a proper respect is paid thereto, it is understood to yield life and peace, as each of these being inseparably therefrom. Likewise, when it is said, that the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; the meaning of which is this, the animal nature being prior in birth, taketh the ascendancy over the rational, and thereby striveth against it, in order that it may not only gain the superiority, but also keep it in subjection. But as the rational draws towards maturity, it then begins to contend, and take up arms, by waging war against the animal. And in all these cases, the one is still held forth in the sense of spiritual, and the other, under the term natural, or animal; and wherever it is expressed otherwise, of the spirit, it is only of extraordinary emergencies, to wit, such as in giving of the Holy Spirit, in order to work miracles, with various operations of all the different supernatural and miraculous gifts, necessary for the propagating of Christianity, which may be said to have continued for near the space of the first century.

P O S T S C R I P T.

BEFORE I take my leave of this subject, I cannot but observe, that such as are not only the propagators, but patronizers of this doctrine, with different others, (much of the same stamp,) that are said to arise therefrom, they are not only brothers to the profane swearer, with all his different anathemas, but are infinitely worse. The profane swearer, indeed, most presumptuously, without licence either asked or granted, does not only swear, but also requires of God, as his executioner, not only to curse, but damn to hell, whomsoever he (viz. the blasphemer,) will at his command; an office, or piece of drudgery, so dishonourable, that one will be ashamed to require of the meanest slave in his house. Yet, though such wretched freedom be used with God, it does not hurt nor add any disparagement to his character. But such as ascribe to God doctrines, under the sanction of his authority, in order that they may be received as divine, though diametrically opposite to the rectitude of his nature, are greater offenders still; for the one, if it could possibly be effected, ungod the Deity, by requiring of him to perform such a degree of abject slavery, as if subject to the office of their executioner; but the other detracts therefrom, by ascribing to him such actions as would make him unjust, ungod him more still;

which is evident from what follows: For instance, if a parent should take away the life of his own child, would any refuse that he is guilty, and not liable to punishment for such an act of wickedness committed against the innocent? No. Yet this is infinitely short of what they ascribe unto God, not only the taking away the life of an infant, (which he may very justly do, though innocent;) but also to inflict, not only temporal, but eternal punishment thereon, tho' for no fault of its own, but only for the sin of another, (viz. an adult,) committed thousands of years before it had a being, which sin could by no means possible, according to justice, be imputed thereto. And for one to cut off the life of the innocent, in way of punishment, is possibly the highest affront that justice can receive, if ascribed thereto. But for one to torment, or inflict the pain of death upon a being, and yet suspend its life, in this miserable state, from dissolution, only for no other purpose, but that it may endure and suffer punishment, though for no fault of its own, (as observed in the above,) but only for the offence of another, committed thousands of years before it so much as had an existence, therefore could not possibly either foresee the event, or prevent the action, and yet is said to be punished upon the account thereof. This is an hypothesis, the impiety of which no created power can possibly exceed; and thus they unjustly hold forth

God, because possessed of absolute power; but it is no doubt a doctrine by far too extravagant for the inhabitants of hell itself. Therefore, when once men are come to the real knowledge of the true God, they will even look back with astonishment, in what manner they could possibly form such dreadful conceptions of the Deity. Thus, I reject all such doctrines, and those who would have God to conform to what is inconsistent with the nature of his own perfections; because they would have him comply with their immoral desires, rather than submit their opinions to what is agreeable with the nature and perfections of the true God. Hence, all such doctrines whatever, that do not only confound, but also strike against the perfections of the Deity, (in making each thereof inconsistent with another) however much these doctrines may be esteemed by men of weak and credulous minds, they can never possibly meet with the approbation of the true God. And to believe and accept of doctrines inconsistent with the nature and perfections of the Deity, which would be to make him unjust, is to receive the articles of our religion from the devil, and not from God. And, besides this, with what astonishment will our posterity look back on their credulous ancestors, and wonder by what means they could possibly form such gross inconsistent notions of the Deity, not only to themselves, but also to transmit the same over to their

posterity, as the articles of their religion, whereby they falsely imagined, that in the believing of these they were serving God.

Again, where is the sect of Christians, whatever be the doctrines or tenets they have received from their ancestors, as articles of faith, though diametrically opposite to the very nature of the Deity, but will be revered and sustained by them, even as infallible, as if received from God himself, though nothing more than the fabricated fancies of such whose tenets they revere. But there is no doctrine or opinion whatever can possibly be so gross, as that when once it has received the sanction of a superstitious and enthusiastic priest, but what will be received, as divine, by the credulous and unthinking crowd, and such as are not only the votaries, but creatures of men, to the dishonour of God.

Lastly, It may suffice, for the whole, that the disposition of every kind of animal may very easily be distinguished by the nature of the food upon which it subsists. From this it is evident, that whatever doctrines have been invented by men, to the dishonour of the true God, are only food for such as have modelled out the Deity after the perverse imaginations of their own immoral desires. Therefore, because God is not accountable to any for his procedure, they would even make him act altogether inconsistent with the very nature of his existence, in order to sup-

port their wild hypothesis. For whatever men may falsely ascribe to God, that infringeth his justice and mercy, as no vacuum can possibly exist, the absence of which would most inevitably be supplied with injustice and tyranny. Now, I would to God, that men would judge impartially, and flee every doctrine that tends to his dishonour, which would make him appear inconsistent with himself; such as the consigning over to prison the whole human race, under sentence of damnation, as not knowing but that every moment the same will be put in execution against them; when, in reality, they were formed for the enjoyment of God, in order to be happy in him, both in this world, and that which is to come, unless they destroy themselves, through their own personal guilt. But all such, who, through habit, are become slaves from choice, are like prisoners, who, through custom, delight in the rattling of their own chains; of such there is not the least hopes left, for their recovery or deliverance therefrom. Yea, though we should meet with the condemnation of the whole human world, it is our indispensable duty to declare that which is right; therefore, believe me or not, it is just as sure as God is God, that whatever hath been falsely ascribed to him, as if he either did, or should require, in the way of religion, that which would make him unjust, this would be no less than to break and dissolve that

divine harmony which subsists amongst the perfections of the Deity, which would only be to confound each perfection with another. But there is no doctrine can possibly be so gross, in any religion whatever, but what will, through antiquity, be revered as sacred, and remain next to inseparable from its different votaries, who, by cleaving fast thereto, it will be sustained, as infallible, when once canonized by the authority and grimace of a superstitious clergy. And likewise, however unaccountable it is to refuse the being of a God, it is incomparably worse, and more impious still, to propagate and patronize doctrines which would make him unjust, or inconsistent with himself, viz. such as punishing the innocent upon account of the guilty; and also, to require more of his creatures than what is in their power to perform; with the inflicting of punishment upon their coming short thereof. And not only this in particular, but men may, upon the same basis, just as well pretend that there is no God, as to believe, to his dishonour, that he is such an one, who hath not only formed them for damnation, but hath also, without reason, decreed them over, before ever they had an existence, to everlasting perdition; in which light he is thereby represented as one that delighteth in their misery. Now, is it possible, that though one of these malignant spirits were permitted to return from the infernal regions,

that he could possibly represent God in a more black or worse light than what he is set forth in these doctrines, by such as pretend to be his best friends, though nothing more (by holding opinions to his dishonour) than his greatest enemies? These doctrines, with different others of the like nature, when once they have received the sanction of fallible men, and in every respect as fallible heads, are sustained as orthodox by the ignorance of a world, though to the dishonour of God; and whatever tends to the contrary, that will remove the imputation of these and the like doctrines from the Deity, would be counted no less by such than the grossest of heresy; an epithet not only given to what was expressed by the prophets alone, but also to both Christ and his apostles; and the sentence of death was, no doubt, sustained as orthodox by all such, and others of like nature, who took away their lives from the earth, for what they professed. But the propagating of such doctrines depends much upon the disposition and ignorance of the people who receive them; for if such really knew that there was a God, and that he was a just one, it is simply impossible that ever they could either believe or accept thereof; for if people did not, from ignorance, receive them upon trust, such doctrines as redound to the dishonour of God, they would remain still in the hands of them by whom they were manufactured; but the populace, or greatest part of

people, receive their religion, with the different articles contained therein, much after the same manner that children receive their knowledge; for whatever they hear uttered by their parents, or others, it is commonly received as the foundation and unquestionable source of their belief. In like manner, whatever doctrines the general part of Christians receive from their parents, especially if ancient, yea, though it were to ungod the Deity, it will be esteemed as infallible, and taken into the calendar of their belief, as divine.

And I further declare, whether men believe it or not, that idolatry, which is no less than the robbing a just God of his right, is infinitely short of their ascribing to him doctrines, whereby he is made, or represented, to act inconsistent with himself, as unjust. For to rob persons of their money or goods can never hurt their moral character; but when it is said, not only by an enemy, but more especially by their pretended friends, that they act inconsistently or unjustly, they do not only take away their moral character, but are guilty of murder. Therefore this last would be worse, and more culpable than the other. Also, yea whether men believe it or not, it is morally certain, that whatever doctrine doth infringe the nature of the Deity, it is not because they have received it from their ancestors, that will excuse them before a just God; for, if this

were the case, there is no article of doctrine, whether Christian or Pagan, could possibly be so gross, that when once conveyed to posterity, but what the patronizing thereof would be excusable; therefore such could not be chargeable, upon the account thereof, as offensive to God. But we are not to imagine, that the receiving our opinions, upon the faith of our ancestors being in the right, will excuse our mistakes; for every one will, no doubt, most infallibly be judged and answer for himself at last before God, to whom alone he must give an account; for it has generally been the case, in all ages, that such as those, who laboured under the grossest mistakes in religion, always thought that knowledge and true piety were only bound up in them alone; and as they were the persons, that wisdom would infallibly die with themselves. But will any of such admit, of what they have believed, to be tried by the above test? No; for whatever has been received into the calendar of their belief, is not to be called in question, but sustained as infallible, as from God himself. Now, there is nothing, at present, remains more necessary to be observed, than this, that the leaders of this people cause them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed; and also, that when the blind leadeth the blind, both fall into the ditch together.

S U P P L E M E N T.

I SHALL now conclude this first volume with a single reflection concerning the abuse of our religion. There is not one state I know appears more similar to the Christian church than that of the prodigal son; for the prodigal, while he continued a youth, lived with submission to the government of his father; so did the Christian church, who, for the first three centuries, were still subject to the laws of its Master: but the prodigal son, being come to age, and having no sooner received that portion of goods given him by his father, than he immediately went astray; and having fallen in with the different vices of the world, he thereby soon wasted his substance with harlots and riotous living; upon which account he was looked upon by his father, no better than as one already dead. So, in like manner, did it fare with the Christian church, but more especially upon the back of the third century; in particular, a great many of its teachers having come over from the school of Plato, whose doctrines being their only favourite, they soon made them to coincide and harmonize with the other: and thus, by intermixing the Platonic, or heathen philosophy, with the Christian religion, it was thereby corrupted to such a degree, that, in the fourth century, and after, by reason of so many gross errors being invented, and interwoven therewith, thro'

the ignorance of its teachers, it, like the prodigal son, became not only loathsome, but also both dead and detestable in the sight of God. And as the prodigal, through his vices, being now so far reduced, as to feed upon husks, in order to prevent his perishing for want; so, in like manner, hath the Christian world, through the gross errors and corruptions of men, been reduced to that extremity for so many different centuries, as to live upon such fare as husks and swine's food, in place of spiritual bread. This being not only the case with Papists alone, but also too much with Protestants, who have not only brought along with them the same erroneous doctrines, but retain them still, as infallible, unto this present day. For an incontestible evidence of which, see the woful delusion whereunto they are fallen, in their being not only divided, but subdivided, into so many different sets as they now visibly are, each party being left, by God, to wander into the snare and wild maze of the corrupt doctrines of men, in search of their religion, where its substance is not to be found; each sect falsely believing that they only themselves are in the right, and that every other party, exclusive thereof, is in the wrong; and whoever will admit themselves the freedom to look impartially thereinto, with so much as but half an eye, must inevitably see this, as a visible judgment from God, upon Christians, for the many grievous errors wherewith they have

not only corrupted the Christian religion, to the dishonour of its author, but also persevere therein, and till once these errors be eradicated therefrom, and Christians give up with such heretical doctrines, as rob God, make him unjust and inconsistent with himself, and emerge therefrom, by moulding out the articles of their religion agreeable to the nature of God, they can never possibly expect his return, nor enjoy his blissful presence therein. It being now evident from the above reflection, how that the Christian religion hath not only been corrupted, but wounded to death, in the house of those who style themselves, not its enemies, but also its best, though nothing more than its pretended, friends, by which, not only thousands, but millions of Christians have been stung to death, and thereby fallen a sacrifice to their blind zeal. The particular cause of this mournful effect ariseth from people's admitting the nature of their religion, with the different articles contained therein, to be moulded out by men, independent of God; and, according to this said degree wherewith men are overcome, so is that spirit of charity and humanity removed from the human breast; for when once you have removed humanity therefrom, by adopting the nostrums of fallible men, as articles of faith, into the calendar of your belief, independent of God, there is nothing else can possibly remain in its place, but only a mere savage wait-

ing to devour up and prey upon whatever comes in its way; and the effecting a deliverance therefrom can never possibly be sustained less thereto than a resurrection, or life from the dead. Therefore, as acting from such a principle, it is now evident, of whose society and servants they are: for, as expressed by our Saviour, Ye are of your father the devil, and the works of your father ye will do; for he was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth. What is here mentioned concerning these superstitious zealots, being suitable to the above, I shall next refer this subject to what was delivered to John, concerning the church of Smyrna; "I know
" the blasphemy of them which say they are
" Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of
" Satan." This, with as just propriety, may be applied to such that pretend to be Christ's best friends, who, out of a mistaken and blind zeal, thirst after blood. Similar thereto, "I know
" the blasphemy of them which say they are
" CHRISTIANS, and are not, but are the syna-
" gogue of Satan," in whom resides the spirit of persecution, who will put to death all such that are not of the same sentiments with themselves, yea, though contrary to what Christ has commanded. And wherever this badge of the wolf in sheep's cloathing is to be found, be assured of it, they are nothing else but missionaries sent abroad by the devil, which being agitated by the same

spirit, they are thereby metamorphosed into the form of zealous servants for Christ, in order to deface, and bring dishonour upon his religion, that he, (viz. the devil,) may the better prevent the spread thereof. This is the only infallible mark whereby such are to be distinguished from others; they will no sooner perceive themselves attacked, by what is here expressed, but they will immediately (in order to stir up the people) exclaim, and cry out, with Demetrius and the rest of the craftsmen, in favours of their Diana, saying with the town-clerk, That these things are what cannot be spoken against.

Further, it is only by virtue of these different corruptions, invented, and interwoven into the church of Christ, during the space of the fourth century, especially the former part thereof, which hath proved an effectual bar, in preventing not only millions of Jews, but may also be said the remainder of the whole human world from becoming Christian. And for an infallible proof thereof, there has almost none, if it were not for a wonder, come over since that period; and these, too, more from constraint and fashion, than from choice; and till once the detestable bar of these corruptions be taken away, and removed therefrom, they never will embrace Christianity: for the very hearing of such corruptions are an abomination to every one that is not bred up under them, and appear odious thereto, though even at

a distance; as there is nothing can possibly be more simple, pure, and easy than the Christian religion when first delivered by its author; this being evident from the tenor of what is therein required of us, in the manner of our acceptance, which consists only in the paying a proper and unfeigned respect, by living in obedience to what he has therein commanded, which strictly coincides with the nature of the great God. But, on the other hand, there is nothing more intricate, abstruse, and unintelligible, than what the Christian religion is become, through the cunning and artifice of priests, which through the different corruptions that have been invented and interwoven thereunto, by the said craft, it is thereby now become detestable in degree to both God, and all such as are not yet fallen a sacrifice to these abominations; but when once expunged of these corruptions, it will then again become as simple and pure as ever. Hence, one thing remains, which is as follows, it being still allowed a hardship for men to give up and part with their opinions, in whatever religion they have been instructed; yea, although there should be five hundred different sects of Christians, each sect would still be prejudiced in favours of their own party, and the opinions held forth by them: for instance, would it not be supposed an hardship for a person to give up and part with an acquaintance or familiar friend? Most certainly.

it would. From this it is evident, that it is in every degree as great an hardship still, to give up and part at once with our opinions, (though ignorantly wrong,) wherewith we too often most vainly imagine that we do not only pay respect, but also thereby worship and serve God; while the nature and consequence of such opinions are nothing less than an abomination unto him. From this it is obvious, that the pure and undefiled religion, brought from heaven by Jesus Christ, being adulterated through the corrupt doctrines of men, and having thereby taken such deep root, cannot possibly be expelled therefrom, till once the different votaries for these gross corruptions be wasted away and perish from the earth, like those ancient idolaters who wandered for the space of forty years in the Wilderness, and also their posterity, being proof against instruction, upon which account, they, by the appointment of God, underwent seventy years captivity, in order that both they, and their idolatries, might die together; so that by others seeing their punishment, might, from example, repent, and turn unto God, by the reformation of their lives: for there is no corruption in any religion whatever, can possibly be so gross, as to exceed that which maketh God unjust, such as the punishing the innocent upon account of the guilty, and as if he required more of his creatures than what they are capable to perform. These,

with whatever doctrines they have propagated similar thereto, and invented by men, to the dishonour of God, the holding of such are equally, if not a greater sin, than that of Judas; for tho' Judas had the small reward of thirty pieces of silver, yet he never accused his master, by ascribing to him doctrines inconsistent with the nature of God; but they, for no reward, do hold that which is diametrically opposite to the very essence of the Deity. Hence, Judas is said to have repented of his sin; yet he, by despairing of pardon, went to his place; but they, instead of repenting, do rather vindicate themselves, upon account thereof, to the dishonour of God, and thereby go to their place, as Judas did to his. It being evident from the above, that if we should admit of ourselves to be imposed upon, in the nature of our religion, by ignorant or designing men, in their ascribing the sanction of God's authority in support of doctrines and articles of faith, (in order that they may be received as divine,) whose quality being such as are not only contrary, but altogether inconsistent with the nature of the Deity; and though these articles will neither agree nor coincide therewith, yet, after all, receive them, as authentic, into the calendar of our belief. When once this comes to be the case, there is no religion, doctrine, or article of faith, can possibly be so gross, but what may therefore be received by us as divine: for it

being a standing principle with such as give place to impure notions of God; they would rather sacrifice to his dishonour, the whole of his divine attributes, before that so much as one of their own nostrums should fail, or be brought into disrepute.

Considering what length I am now advanced, I do not only flatter myself, but hereby enjoy that hope, under God, that what hath been expressed in this first volume shall have the good effect, in spite of all the powers of darkness, not only to persuade, but also to confirm thousands in a just and proper knowledge of the Deity; and if it shall prove an effectual mean, under God, to convince but so much as one soul of the error of his way, that he may turn therefrom, I shall not only rejoice in my labour, but shall also think myself happy at his deliverance. Yet, after all, with respect to a great many of mankind, such as are sold under priest-craft, I am afraid I shall have occasion to join with St. Paul in his complaint, where he saith, that as after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus.

The End of the First Volume.

The Author, after having read the book over in print, judges the following Additions and Emendations necessary.

PAGE 72, line 18, after father, add what follows, Not forgetting his refusing to relieve his brother, when upon the point of starvation, except complying with his extravagant charge of renouncing his birth-right.

Page 81, line 4, after period, add, Against the pillaging of that perfidious race.

Page 107, line ult. add, From what has been expressed in this chapter, in rejecting, as divine, whatever will not correspond with the nature and rectitude of the true God, because inconsistent therewith, will, no doubt, be accounted Deism by all such who can receive into the calendar of their belief, not only the greatest of injustice, (witness the command given by Moses to spoil the Egyptians, which is a downright contradiction to the commands, Thou shalt not steal; thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself; or, do to others as we would wish that they should do to us,) but also the grossest absurdities, as divine, when once canonized under the sanction of God's authority. But there are no names or epithets, though ever so black, should either discourage or frighten us from receiving the truth, and from holding just and equitable sentiments of God, not contrary, but conformable to his nature. Do we not see, for instance, how

that our Saviour himself was not only ridiculed, as the worst of sinners, by that wicked and perfidious race, (ripe for destruction,) for delivering the will of God to men, but was also called a devil, and not only a devil, but even Belzebub, the prince of the devils? It being therefore now evident, from the many invidious names given to our Saviour, and others, for declaring the will of God, there is no person or persons needs to be dismayed of whatever epithets the world may throw out against or brand them with, seeing that the greatest part of mankind, whose minds are only slaves to the bigoted superstitions and presumptuous ignorance of others, who are, in every respect, as far from a just knowledge of God, and distance from the truth, as they themselves.

At the end of section 2, page 121, line 3, add, When I speak of a revealed religion or revelation, I only mean to be understood of what was delivered by our Saviour, or any other person, answerable to the nature and rectitude of the true God, which is inseparable from the religion of nature implanted by God into the mind of man in his first formation.

Page 169, line 2, after religion, add, Before I take my leave of this section, I shall just barely observe, and mention another wrong-headed argument used in favours of infant-baptism, which is as follows, viz. that baptism came in place of circumcision, which was to be performed the

eighth day after the birth of the infant. But this is nothing more than a piece of mere childish ignorance; therefore deserves no place of credit with such as are people of judgment. For an infallible proof that baptism, or immersing in water, did not come in room of circumcision, this ceremony was in use amongst that people, even from Moses down to the end of the Jewish state; for it is said they all were baptised unto him, (in the cloud, and in the sea,) i. e. to Moses, their great leader: and not only this, but when such as were heathens, or born of heathen parents, became proselytes to Judaism, they were not admitted thereunto, by undergoing circumcision alone; but, by this ceremony of immersing the whole body into water, in order that they might be washed from their heathenish pollutions, and thereby absolved from all their former impurities; and also amongst the Jews themselves, this rite or ceremony was used in all their different purifications, not only amongst the common people, but also their priests immersed themselves in water, before they went in to minister and perform the services of the temple. Further, was not this ceremony of baptism used by John in Jordan to them of the circumcision? so that, by confessing their sins, they were immersed under water, which signified their being washed from all their spiritual pollutions, by an unfeigned repentance, in turning unto God. And besides this, if such a thing had been the case, as

that baptism succeeded and took place in room of circumcision, it would only have descended to males, and been circumscribed to them alone, because females had neither part nor lot in that matter. Therefore, according to the said doctrine, of baptism taking place in room of circumcision, women would have been altogether excluded therefrom, and deprived of either claim or right to the ceremony of Christian baptism.

Page 199, line ult. after blasphemy, add, A judicious author, upon this subject, observes, " There are many, saith he, who, in order to account for the present weakness and wickedness of mankind, imagine, that, upon the fall of Adam, the human faculties were depraved, either naturally, or by some taint derived from him, or by some act of God. But the scriptures say no such thing, and we want no such hypothesis to account for them, because the very same reason or cause, be it what it will, which accounts for the sin of the first man, who came pure out of the hands of the Creator, will account for the sins of all men ever since; and, to suppose that God would deprave the will, or weaken the understanding of men, merely as a punishment for what they could not help, is a most unworthy imputation upon the divine goodness; and it is no less so upon his wisdom, as if he were capable of contradiction and inconsistency. This notion was first invented to shew the certainty of eternal damnation to all the posterity of Adam, if Christ

had not died; for as much as by this taint, or corruption of nature, it was rendered impossible for them to do things well-pleasing to God. But this argument proves too much, and therefore concludes nothing: for the less capable a man is of perfection, the less will be required of him; and if it were impossible for him to do things well-pleasing to God, it would cease to be his duty."

Again, he saith, "That some of the Christians maintain, contrary to the first principles of Christianity, and even natural religion, that the guilt of Adam's sin descended upon his posterity, and also the punishment. But this is impossible from the nature of justice; for justice requires, that the punishment shall not be extended beyond the guilt, and guilt is merely personal, and inseparable from the agent who contracted it; for no one can be guilty of a fault, properly speaking, but he that committed it. Now, the fault, or guilt, cannot therefore descend, or be transferred from one person to another; and if the guilt cannot descend, or be transferred, neither can the punishment; for if the punishment were to descend, or be transferred, without the guilt, it would fall upon the innocent; but this it will not do, because God is just; and justice requires, (as above,) that punishment shall not extend beyond guilt. Now, it is therefore impossible that the posterity of Adam should have been concerned at all in his guilt, or even privy

to it, because they were not in being when the guilt was contracted; and, consequently, if God is just, they are not accountable for it." *Benjamin Ben Mordecai.*

Page 223, line 22, after God, add, Before I take my leave of this section, I cannot avoid observing, that if such a thing as what they call original sin did exist, and that every particular transgression was an inevitable consequence thereof, is it possible, that our Saviour, who exposed the different vices, which accomplished the destruction of that wicked people, would have spoke of the infection of this sin, in such abstruse terms, as vainly imagined by some, and not have warned us of the malignant nature of such corruption, as is said to have effected the inevitable damnation of the whole human race? No, not possible. Infidels, I acknowledge, may, through ignorance, receive it; but such as have attained to a proper degree of knowledge never will.

Page 235, line 14, after God, add, Lastly, and to conclude this section, Hence, whatever gay dress, and plausible arguments, such may use in favours of this doctrine, and others of like nature, built thereupon, for garnishing them over, in order that they may the easier deceive the credulous and unthinking crowd, these, who, for want of knowledge, are only fighting the devil's battles, under the name, not only of God's banner, but are also, as it were, thieving

for slaves the souls of men, under a sanction of piety, and pretended zeal for God's glory. But where is that piece of injustice or wickedness, when once canonized under the sanction of God's authority, by a superstitious and enthusiastic priest, but what will infallibly be received, as divine, not only by the credulous and unthinking crowd, but also by the weak, the ignorant, and superstitious devotee.

Page 265, at the end of section 41, add, But as the devil never had morals, it is therefore no wonder though those, who are his agents, cry down and set aside morality, as of no value, by declaring themselves against it. Hence, whatever degrees of piety such may falsely claim, or pretend to, who, out of a blind zeal, thirst after the blood and damnation of others, (however strict in their morals, and unblamable in their characters,) because of their holding sentiments different from themselves, they may well hold their diploma from the devil, but can never possibly receive or hold it from God.

Page 268, at the end of the 42d section, add, Hence, what is here expressed in the above, may suffice to elucidate the nature of that fallacious doctrine, which is the great key or engine of priestcraft, wherewith they impiously fetter down, and, as it were, handcuff the minds of the people, and thereby enslave their souls in subjection to the blind zeal and prejudices of their sophistical dominion.

More Additions and Corrections.

Page 10, line 18, after evidence, *read*, of a defect, and that the disease. Page 18, line 2, for this, *read*, these. Page 25, line 13, for, the double portion, *read*, a double portion. Page 25, line ult. for, inhibition, *read*, prohibition. Page 27, line 10, in place of, is from the devil, *read*, is only from the devil. P. 27, l. 28, instead of, a zeal, *read*, an zeal. Page 28, line 4, *read*, are not carnal. Page 33, line 26, for, a wooden deity, *read*, metal, or wooden deity. Page 35, chapter 5, line 9, for, fallen in, *read*, fallen in with. Page 36, line 25, instead of, by his requiring, *read*, as if requiring. P. 36, l. 27, in place of, no good thing required, *read*, no good thing as required. Page 46, line 29, in place of, they do, *read*, they who do. Page 49, line 21, for, and agreeable, *read*, and act agreeable. Page 55, line ult. in place of, without, *read*, with. Page 70, line 26, *read*, giveth it a quality. Page 86, l. 26, in place of, like himself, *read*, like him, or of a piece. Page 89, line 28, *read*, and as nothing. Page 47, line 1, instead of, in corroboration thereof, *read*, in corroboration therewith. Page 97, line 15, *read*, being to itself. P. 97, l. 28 and 29, instead of, thou mayest look upon it, *read*, thou, O man, mayest look upon thy sustaining, as divine, the putting to death the innocent upon the account of the guilty, be assured, that for all these inconsistencies, and others. Page 109, line 16, for, text, *read*, tenet. Page 110, line 5, for, horizon at twelve o'clock, *read*, horizon, and at twelve o'clock at night. Page 121, line 1, in the 3d section, *read*, this, as observed in the above section. Line 17 of the said section, *read*, ears thereunto. Page 122, line 3, *read*, from temptation, and the. Page 133, line 13, *read*, as are the. Page 145, line 10, for, each thereof, *read*, each voracious animal. Page 150, line 9, *read*, powers. Page 156, line 15, instead of, being more evident, *read*, being now evident. P. 156, l. 16, for affection, *read*, affliction. Page 162, end of line 26, *read*, than what these texts are. Page 171, line 16, *read*, such as are. Page 176, line 1, *read*, acquired or regained. Page 177, for, it is not, *read*, is it not. Page 178, line 25, *read*, to have come. Page 179, line 15, *read*, own wild hypothesis. Page 182, line 5, *read*, it shall die. P. 182, l. 14, *read*, it shall die. Page 184, line 13, *read*, Besides all this, it was only a proverb used by that insatuated and ignorant people, in order to excuse themselves of their different vices, in which they did so much abound. Page 187, line ult. *read*, was as capable. Page 191, l. 9, for, only a small difference, *read*, only this small difference. Page 193, line 15, *read*, ascribed for sanction. P. 193, l. 23, *read*, of his justice. Page 194, line 7, *read*, the pretended sanction. Page 200, line 12, from the beginning of the section, *read*, may indeed very. Page 202, line 8, instead, of their, *read*, of this. Page 208, line 4, *read*, a passion, or rather what expresses this passion. Page 239, line 6, from the beginning of the section, *read*, from the world. Page 259, line 11, *read*, most false. Page 162, line 13, *read*, this imaginary sin. Page 265, section 42, line 9, of said section, for, falsely, *read*, false. Page 274, line 15, qualities of which he is. Page 275, line 5, *read*, these known perfections. Page 301, line 13, *read*, is so far. P. 301, l. 14, for on the contrary, *read*, that on the contrary. Page 302, line 23, for, in way of copulation, *read*, in the act of procreation. Page 266, line 3, for, their reward, *read*, their demerit. Page 265, line 11, *read*, than, viz. morals. Page 284, line 13, *read*, means, by the best of critics, only brought forth. Page 301, line 26, *read*, female of whatever animals. Page 314, line 4, *read*, rigid and strict. Page 331, line 24, *read*, who will put to death, and also damn to hell all such. Page 335, line 16, *read*, being now evident. Page 336, line 5, for, own nostrums, *read*, favourite nostrums.

